micro Adventurer

The computer strategy and simulation magazine

March 1985

75p

Zork — surviving the underground empire

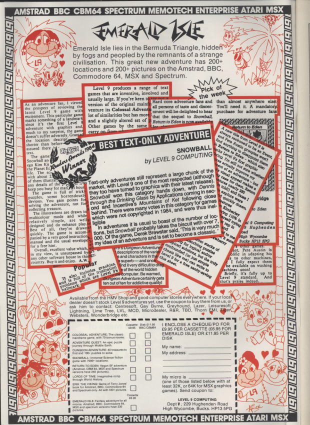
Micro board games

Arcade Adventuring



WIN £350 of s/w from Lothlorien

Carve up In Karn



AMSTRAD BBC CBM64 SPECTRUM MEMOTECH ENTERPRISE ATARI MSX
EMERALD ISLE
Emerald Isle lies in the Bermuda Triangle, hidden by fogs and peopled by the remnants of a strange civilisation. This great new adventure has 200+ locations and 200+ pictures on the Amstrad, BBC, Commodore 64, MSX and Spectrum.
Level 9 produces a range of text games that are inventive, involved and usually large.
As an adventure fan, I viewed the prospect of reviewing the latest Level 9 game with excitement. This particular game marks something of a landmark since it's the first Level 9 adventure with graphics and, much to my surprise, the game doesn't suffer adversely.
The game is full of tricky puzzles, some horrendously devious. You gain points for solving the adventure, not for collecting treasure.
The illustrations are drawn in multicolour mode and while relatively simple, are well designed and do enhance play. Best of all, they're drawn quickly. The game is accompanied by a very good instruction manual and the usual envelope for a free hint.
Overall, excellent value which, in my view, is unsurpassed by any other software house in this country. Buy it and enjoy. A.W.
Pick of the week
Hard core adventure fans and all persons of taste and discernment will be delighted to hear that the sequel to Snowball, Return to Eden is now available
than almost anywhere else. You'll need it. A mandatory purchase for adventure fans
CRASH Readers Awards 1984 Winner
BEST TEXT-ONLY ADVENTURE
SNOWBALL
by LEVEL 9 COMPUTING
Text-only adventures still represent a large chunk of the market, with Level 9 one of the most respected (although they too have turned to graphics with their latest release). Snowball won this category hands down, with Dennis through the Drinking Glass by Applications coming in second and Incentive's Mountains of Ket following close behind. There were many votes in this category for games which were not copyrighted in 1984, and were thus ineligible
In adventures it is usual to boast of the number of locations, but Snowball probably takes the biscuit with over 7,000. Of the game, Derek Brewster said, 'This is very much my idea of an adventure and is set to become a classsic.'
Return to Eden
A new title from Level 9 is always reckoned to be an Event, and Pete Austin groupies won't find anything to disappoint them in Return to Eden – which also marks Level 9's first graphic
Level 9 Computing
229 Hughenden Road
High Wycombe
Bucks HP13 5PG
Briefly, it's fully up to Level 9 standard. And that's praise indeed.
Popular
Available from the HMV Shop and good computer stores everywhere. If your local dealer doesn't stock Level 9 adventures yet, use the coupon to buy them from us, or ask him to contact: Centresoft, Gay Byrne, Greyhound, Lazer, Leisuresoft, Lightning, Lime Tree, LVL, MCD, Microdealer, R&R, TBD, Thorn EMI, Tiger, Websters, Wonderbridge etc.
Cassette £9.95
Disk £11.95 BBC/CBM64
COLOSSAL ADVENTURE: The classic mainframe game, with 70 bonus rooms.
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DUNGEON ADVENTURE: 40 treasures to find and 100+ puzzles to solve.
SNOWBALL: Immense Science fiction game with 7000+ locations.
RETURN TO EDEN: Vegan SF adventure (Amstrad, CBM 64, MSX and Spectrum versions have 240 pictures).
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ERIK THE VIKING: Game of Terry Jones' book for Amstrad, BBC, Commodore 64 and Spectrum only. All with 180+ pictures.
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I ENCLOSE A CHEQUE/PO FOR £9.95 PER CASSETTE (£6.95 FOR EMERALD ISLE) OR £11.95 PER DISK
My name:
My address:
My micro is
(one of those listed below with at least 32K, or 64K for MSX graphics games). Send coupon to:
LEVEL 9 COMPUTING
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High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 5PG
AMSTRAD BBC CBM64 SPECTRUM MEMOTECH ENTERPRISE ATARI MSX

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Adventurer

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SUNSHINE

ADVENTURES ● WAR GAMES ● SIMULATIONS

EDITORIAL

MULTI USER GAMES are springing to the fore again. First, Multi User Dungeon, or *MUD* as it is more popularly known, looks set to reach an even wider audience than it does at present. Secondly, more people are getting in on the act, notably Infomania with *MUNG* — Multi User Network Game.

MUD, which is currently available on Compunet and Essex University's mainframe, is being further developed and expanded by a new company Multi User Entertainment or MUSE. Backed by Century, MUSE is headed by Simon Dally and includes Richard Bartle and Roy Trubshaw, *MUD's* co-founders.

The new version of *MUD* should be available in September. It will be considerably bigger than the present version of *MUD*, with over 900 roooms.

A special feature of the game will allow non subscribers to play before committing themselves to joining — a sort of 'try before you buy' scheme.

In addition, *MUD Two* is being written so that it will be virtually machine independent. This should enable MUSE to licence the game throughout the world — international *MUD* tournaments may arrive sooner than you think.

But, though *MUD* clearly has a strong headstart, other companies are following in its wake. Watford based Infomania claims to have developed a Multi User game with over 10,000 locations. Up to 50 people will be able to play simultaneously with 1200/75 modems. Other Multi User games are rumoured to be at various stages of development.

The day of the Multi User game is, if not quite at hand, at least close.

LETTERS

Send your hints, successes, complaints and compliments to Letters Page, Micro Adventurer, 12-13 Little Newport St, London WC2H 7PP

Adventure Helpline

I AM NEW to adventure games, and at the moment have only completed one adventure, *The Count* by Scott Adams.

I had completed most of the adventure except for the final few problems, and had come to a complete stop!

Your magazine and especially the Adventure Help phone service came to my rescue and gave me the final vital clues I needed to complete my first adventure.

My gratitude must go to Ken Matthews for the friendly and extremely helpful way he answered my problems.

I hope to have many more adventures knowing I have the backing of your magazine and of course your adventure help line behind me.

G Saunders
32 Davenport Avenue
Oadby

Thanks!

THERE ARE plenty of things to grumble about in the world of adventures, but I would like to give praise where it is due. Just before Christmas I was completely stuck in an adventure, so I phoned Adventurer's Guild for help. Although it must have been a very busy time for him, Ken Matthews couldn't have been more helpful, and supplied all the information I needed. The Adventureline is friendly, efficient, and best of all, free!

By the way, Adventurer's Guild also sell adventures very efficiently, and at 10% discount. I received the two discs I wanted just a few days after posting my order. I hope Adventurer's Guild will get all the support it deserves, as I thought this sort of service had gone out of fashion.

M Griffiths
Poole
Dorset

WE'VE HAD nothing but praise for Ken's Adventureline — which, incidentally, we do not pay him for. It is entirely independent of *Micro Adventurer*: Ken does it because he loves adventures and likes helping people.

Commodore Midnight

AUGUST 1984 I discovered *Micro Adventurer* and have bought all issues since.

I especially appreciate Adventure Help, the games reviews of course, and the new Boardwalk articles, since magazines on role playing games are very rare here in Holland.

I've got two important questions. Firstly when is Beyond going to publish *Lords of Midnight* and its sequel *Doomdark's Revenge* for the Commodore 64? I can't wait much longer as I watch Spectrum owners having the time of their lives.

Secondly, I'm stuck in *The Hulk*, *The Golden Baton*, and *Ten Little Indians*. Anyone who can help me in those adventures, please write. I can offer help in *The Hobbit* and *Aztec Tomb* adventures.

Ruben Stam
Stormvogelstraat 3
4301 WN Zierikzee
The Netherlands

MIDNIGHT is now available for the Commodore 64.

BBC Quill?

AFTER a half year of looking for the article in all possible magazines for the BBC micro and asking here, there and everywhere I decided to cast my problem in your teeth.

Is there for the BBC micro an adventure generator on the market? If not, will they come? Will you review them all? Apart from all of this I think your magazine contains a lot of interesting and enjoyable pages.

Maarten van Dijken
Slenerbrink 208
7812 HJ Emmen
The Netherlands

CODEWRITER will be publishing a disc version of *The Quill* for the BBC B at some point in the future, under the *AdventureWriter* title.

Doomdark

AFTER READING your review of *Doomdark's Revenge*, I was inspired to once again take up the challenge. I had been playing it every night since Christmas, with only 'somewhat noble' successes. However, one stormy rainy night, with only a mug of tea for a weapon, I sat down to play *Doomdark*.

At 8.59 pm and approximately 12 seconds, I managed to get Luxor, Morkin, Tarithel and old uncle Rorthron, alive to the Gate of Varenorn. Shareth was killed by Tarand the Fey, who was incidentally independant of myself. I'm still trying to figure out who can recruit him!

Has anyone else completed *Doomdark's Revenge?*

If anyone wants help in *Doomdark's Revenge*, I'd be only too pleased to help — send a stamped addressed envelope.

M Palmer
30 Mitchell Road
Canford Heath
Dorset BH17 7SZ

Midnight in Portugal

IN ONE of your latest numbers I read the article on *Lords of Midnight* saying that it was almost impossible to take Ushgarak before Doomdark took Xajorkith.

Well it wasn't easy but I made it. If there is anyone interested in receiving help write to me and I'll be glad to answer you. I would like to receive a map of *The Lords of Midnight* and *Doomdark's Revenge.*

José Abel Goncalves Aguiar
Rua Alfredo Cunha,
225-2ESQ
4450 Matosinhos
Portugal

Talented Tony

I WAS (and am) flattered to see the *Support Tony Bridge* Page in the February issue. Thanks, Hugh Walker and Mr or Mrs Carre, for your kind remarks about my column, which I like to think is of use to some of the readers.

However, I don't think that *Adventure Contact* is the waste that Mr Walker thinks it is. It's true that by the time a problem appears in print, the solution will quite often have made itself obvious — but I look on the *Contact* page as just that, a meeting-place for adventurers. Many people have told me that, after the initial introduction through the page, they have started regular correspondence with many fellow-adventurers, who as we know are in general a helpful lot.

And I was glad to be of assistance to Mark Strachan, of Domark Ltd, although how I enlightened him, I'm not sure. As for his surprise at my apparent inability to get very far with the game — I am but a mere mortal, Mark! It's a pity that, unlike reviewers of motor cars, operas, records and restaurants, reviewers of adventures are faced with the same problems met by every other adventurer. Very rarely, a map and solution will be supplied, which ensures that the reviewer can at least see the whole adventure. Obviously, that was not possible in this case — as Mark points out, I came clean about this, and my remarks on the game content of *Eureka!* were based on the little I had managed to see. Reviewers of motor cars, operas etc, often have retrospective changes of opinion after living with the motor car for a while, and it may be that I, too, will change my mind — but not yet.

As for the response to *Micro Adventurer's Eureka!* competition, this was surely nothing to do with the number of people who had actually bought the program? Rather, it was an endorsement of Currah's popular product.

Tony Bridge

Keeping Mum

HOW NICE to see Tony Bridge's name mentioned so many times on the Letters page of the February issue! I, too, have always thought that Tony should have more space — I mean, what are all those boring reviews and articles doing there, anyway?

Tony's Mum

PS Who *is* this Ken Matthews?

NEWS DESK

If you think you've something newsworthy, call 01-437 4343 and let us know

MUD goes solo

MULTI USER DUNGEON will be going it alone in September. A new company has been set up specifically to market the play by modem game in which dozens of people can participate simultaneously.

MUD is marketed at the moment by Century Communications and is available to subscribers to Compunet. The new company, Multi User Entertainments (MUSE for short) is being backed by Century and will be headed by Simon Dally, who is presently Century's senior editor. MUSE will, however, be an independent organisation.

"Century has decided that *MUD* is so important it needs full time management and development if *MUD Two* is to be written," says Dally.

"The mistake we made was to assume that *MUD* was just another Century software product."

Richard Bartle and Roy Trubshaw, who wrote *MUD* while at Essex University, will also be directors of MUSE.

MUSE aims to have *MUD Two* working by the PCW show in September. The new version will be significantly different to the game running on Compunet or at Essex University.

It will incorporate the existing *MUD*, but as a subsection. There will be a new structure of 'experience levels' so that existing wizards will have to start all over again. There will be over 900 rooms, and the scenarios will be updated regularly.

"Actually, Richard could generate 10,000 rooms in a day — but there would be no challenge to them," claims Dally. "They would just be more of the same."

The main feature of the new *MUD*, however, is that it will be almost machine independent.

"It will run on just about any mini or mainframe in the world," Dally states. "All it will need is two months to convert the interpreter for each new machine — the database will be completely machine portable.

"Once we have *MUD Two* running, we will be able to licence it all over the world."

Players will enrol in *MUD Two* by purchasing a starter pack for around £20. This will include an eight page handbook, '*MUD* credits', and a map and a badge.

The £20 will also include a £10 annual membership fee.

Simon Dally says that packs bought before November 1 will probably include 100 credits, and those bought after then will contain 50.

It is likely that the game will be free until November 1 anyway, so that credits can be saved for use after that date.

The new system will also allow non account holders to play a limited version of the game, via a specially persona called GUEST. This means people can look at the game before committing themselves.

According to Richard Bartle, the first room players enter will be a waiting room, where they can talk without fear of attack, as combat will be forbidden. There will also be magazines lying around for people to read — *Micro Adventurer* of course!

Any readers interested in finding out more about the new version of *MUD* should contact Simon Dally, MUSE, 6 Albemarle Way, London EC1.



Simon Dally — Managing Director of Multi User Enterprise

Eighth Day

EIGHTH DAY Software will be adding graphics to its range of budget *Quilled* software, using Gilsoft's new graphics utility, *The Illustrator*.

Mike White, one of the company's directors, says that the new versions will be £2.50 from distributors, or £1.75 from Eighth Day themselves.

In addition, the company has two new games. The first is called *Earthshock*. Unusually, at one point in the adventure a three way choice leads to three separate mini adventures, one Middle Earth, one Science Fiction, and one post Holocaust.

The second new game is *HRH*, an irreverent look at the Royal Family, — all in the best possible taste, Mike stressed.

"We wanted to do something more than the Return of Erik the Dwarf, or Middle Earth type adventures," he claimed. Commodore 64 and Amstrad versions will be released as soon as Eighth Day gets *Quills* for those machines.

Panzer attack

M C LOTHLORIEN'S next wargame will be *Battle of the Bulge*, a wargame for the Spectrum 48K and Commodore 64. Based on the German Ardennes offensive of late 1944, it will be for two players, one of whom can be the computer. There is also a demo mode, in which the computer will play itself.

The Commodore version will be £9.95. No price has been set for the Spectrum version yet.

Death Valley

KUMA COMPUTERS next three releases will be conversions for the MSX series of micros.

Darkwood Manor is a text only adventure in which a murder has been committed. The player must unmask the killer from the clues scattered in the various locations.

Shadow of the Bear is a graphic adventure in which the player takes the role of the pilot of a spy plane which has been shot down over the USSR. The game begins in Siberia in the middle of winter, and our hero must get overland to the safety of the Chinese border. Hazards will include Russian troops, wild animals, and arctic conditions.

Death Valley Gold Rush is a text and graphic game set in Colorado in 1899. The player is a prospector, and must persuade the bank to lend the money to buy equipment before setting out to find Old Adam's Mine. The ideal route changes every game.

No price has been set for the games yet, but Jon Day of Kuma suggests they will be a maximum of £7.95.

Artic price cut

ARTIC is reducing the price of all its existing adventures, says marketing director Jeff Raggett. This means that well known titles such as *Espionage Island, Golden Apple*, and the recently released *Eye of Bain* will be selling for a suggested price of £1.99.

Artic also has two new releases for the LET Show. Both are for the Spectrum 48K. The first, *Robin Hood*, is a text and graphics adventure set in and around Sherwood Forest.

"The first version we saw had over 100 locations," says Raggett, "but it was text only. We cut that to around 40 locations and added graphics."

The second new game is *Dead at the Controls*, set on a mysteriously abandoned space craft in the far future. Both games cost £6.95.

Artic has also concluded a deal with Imperial Software of Poole.

According to Raggett, "anything that does not follow our normal theme will be released through Imperial Software under a new marketing arrangement."

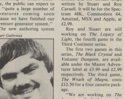
The first game to be affected by this deal is *The Curse of the Seven Faces*.

Master Adventurers

MASTERVISION has launched a new budget label called Master Adventurer, with adventures selling for £2.99 and £3.99.

According to Stuart Galloway, the public can expect to see "quite a large number of adventures coming soon because we have finished our adventure generator system."

The new authoring system


Stuart Galloway

produces programs for all Z80, Commodore, and Apple based machines, Stuart says.

The next game in the Master Adventurer range will be *Sinbad and the Golden Ship*, written by Stuart and Roy Carnell. It will be for the Spectrum 48K, Commodore 64, Amstrad, MSX and Apple, at £2.99.

Roy and Stuart are still working on *The Legacy of Light*, the fourth game in the Third Continent series.

The first two games in this series, *The Black Crystal* and *Volcanic Dungeon*, are available under the Master Adventurer label at £3.99 and £2.99 respectively. The third game, *The Wrath of Magra*, costs £12.50 for a four cassette package.

"We are working on *The Legacy of Light* at the moment," says Stuart. "It's bigger than anything we've


Roy Carnell

done before, including *Magra*. We have several hundred locations in the game and each one is an advendture in itself."

Master Vision are also looking for new programs for the Master Adventurer range, so any readers who have written their own adventures are invited to contact him at Mastervision, 111 Park Road, London NW8 7JL.

Uranium

A & F Software's latest adventure is *The Uranium Factor*, for the BBC B.

According to Mike Fitzgerald, A & F's managing director, the game has more than 100 locations and is set inside a nuclear power station.

Text only, *The Uranium Factor* costs £6.90.



Midnight Sun

COMMODORE 64 owners need wait no longer — *Midnight* is here. The only major difference to the Spectrum version is visible slowly sinking in the west in our screen shot. The sun has been added to help players keep track of the passage of time — but many, no doubt, will emulate Hollywood and ride off into the sunset.

***Midnight* for the Commodore costs £9.95 on cassette.**

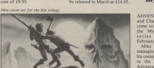
CORLETH THE FEY
He stands on the Plains of Gand, looking South to the Lith of Mithone.

Ket Kassette

INCENTIVE'S *Ket* trilogy will be available for the Commodore 64 and Dragon in April — on one cassette at a cost of £9.95.

Incentive is also working on a combined text and graphic adventure system for the Amstrad CPC464, which will be released in March at £14.95.

New cover art for the Ket trilogy



Mysterious move

ADVENTURE International and Channel 8 Software have come to an arrangement over the Mysterious Adventure series of games. (See February's News Desk).

Mike Woodroffe, AI UK's managing director, says that his company now has the rights to the complete Mysterious Adventure series "for all current and future machines excluding those made by Tandy and the Sord."

Channel 8, which has been taken over by Argus Press Software, will be continuing to produce adventures.

"We will be concentrating on the production of a new type of adventure, completely away from the Mysterious Adventure style, including wandering intelligent monsters and an enhanced parser," says John Williams of Channel 8.

Guilded

AT 11 am on Saturday, March 16, Tony Bridge is performing the ceremony at the Grand opening of the Adventurer's Guild, a new shop in Gravesend. Dedicated to adventure games and role playing games, the shop is run by Ken Matthews, a regular contributor to our pages. If you want to meet Tony or Ken, phone 0474 334008.

Gleeful Gargoyles

***Martin Croft** talks to the team responsible for the graphic adventure Tir Na Nog*

IF YOU HAVE SPENT the last few months swearing at a Sidhe, wandering endless paths through grassy plains around strange megaliths, entering doors to other worlds, carrying nothing more than a lump of Feldspar, then you have been playing *Tir Na Nog*, Gargoyle Games' graphic adventure based on the exploits of the Irish hero Cuchullainn.

Trio

Gargoyle Games is three people. Ted Heathcote takes care of sales and marketing, Greg Follis designs the games, and Roy Carter does the programming.

Greg and Roy are systems analysts, and have known each other for 15 years. Ted used to own a chain of menswear shops, and is now a menswear agent for various big clothing companies. He and Greg have been friends for 20 years. All three are continuing with their full time jobs while setting up Gargoyle Games.

Tir Na Nog is the company's second game — the first was an arcade game called *Ad Astra* — and the public response to it has caught them somewhat by surprise.

"*Ad Astra* started slowly, so we thought this one would do the same. We may have been a bit tardy in our advertising for *Tir Na Nog*," says Greg.

Greg and Roy began working together 10 years ago, and soon discovered a joint interest in games.

"We used to take mornings off and go down to London. We'd visit the Games Centre or Dark They Were and Golden Eyed, the science fiction bookshop, and stroke the chess sets and look at the books," admits Greg.

They came across adventure games on the mainframes they dealt with in the course of their work, and used to play them a fair amount — but not any more, Greg says.

"We've spent most nights for the last eighteen months creating games, not playing them." This was a matter of priority, however, not a conscious decision. Some games designers believe that to play other companies' programs is to risk a contamination of ideas — not so the Gargoyles.

"Not playing other people's games would be like an author not reading other writer's books," as Roy puts it.

Tir Na Nog has its genesis in Greg's love for Celtic mythology and Fantasy literature. The graphics are also Greg's responsibility — his route to computing started at art college, and then went via road work and a butchers' shop. Almost as roundabout as some of the routes players have to take in *Tir Na Nog*!

From left — Roy Carter, Ted Heathcote, Greg Follis.

In fact, road work is very appropriate — the Gargoyle team estimates that there are the equivalent of 3,000 miles of road in the game.

This has led to the most frequent criticism of *Tir Na Nog*. There is so much space to be covered between the various problems that some people get frustrated. Greg, however, is unrepentant.

"We made a marketing mistake in spreading the game out so much, but what we were trying to produce was a real time environmental experience where the puzzles are three miles away from each other, not just next door.

"We conceived it as a place where you had to get from A to B, not be taken there magically."

Another criticism some reviewers have levelled revolves around the lack of any 'reset game' option. As it is, if an object is dropped in a certain place, it stays there no matter how many times the player is killed and sent back to the start location. The only way to get all the objects back to where they start the game is to reload the whole program.

Some doors will only open if the character is carrying the correct object; but that object might end up behind the very door it opens!

"Lots of people were dropping an object, getting killed, and then going off in search of that object when they re-entered the game" Greg recalls.

"Because they might not be able to go the same route again, they were having to solve another quest, entirely of their own making — nothing to do with the object of the game at all!

"Two of our playtesters even invented their own game — one of them would take an object and hide it, then save the game to cassette and give it to the other person with some clues and challenge him to find such and such."

"We soon stopped that," says Roy. "They were supposed to be playtesting our game, not theirs!"

Tir Na Nog is not just a network of roads — there are at least 25 different scenarios, and nearly 100 different puzzles to solve. In addition every different sector has its own

type of scenery, superbly depicted.

"When it was released, *Tir Na Nog* was well out in front in animation terms — but it only takes three or four months for people to catch up," observes Greg.

"We could certainly do better on the graphics," claims Roy.

"There was a point when we had to cut three graphics to fit the game in — we had a huge eagle that was really lovely," says Greg.

"But it would have been the only thing in the game," interjects Roy.

Ted, Roy and Greg seem resigned to the rather ambivalent reception the game has received. As Greg states, "we found a lot of our playtesters said they didn't like the game — but they kept on playing it."

"Perhaps we should have had a *Tir Na Nog* literacy campaign," Ted chips in, "to introduce people to the concepts behind the game."

As Roy succinctly puts it, "we thought we were doing something that everybody else was doing, so we were surprised to find ourselves alone."

The team's belief in the staying power of *Tir Na Nog* has been amply justified by the charts over the last few months, and the program will almost certainly start to climb again once the Commodore version is released.

But one game about a non Christian after world, however full of animated characters, is not enough, as Legend can testify. So what comes next?

"*The Hunting of the Snark* was going to





be our next project," says Greg, "but it's been pointed out that it would be good business sense to bring out a follow up to *Tir Na Nog*.

The Early Years

This means that the next game from Gargoyle is likely to be *Cuchullainn — The Early Years*. It will be set in a city, to provide set boundaries for the action and so avoid the size problems *Tir Na Nog* faced, and, as Roy was quick to point out, there will be plenty of opportunities for graphics.

Greg, however, is still taken with planning the *Snark* game.

"The poem is hypnotic," he enthuses. "I love the idea of a nonsense game, as opposed to a nonsensical game — Carrol takes lateral thinking to its limits, but he is absolutely logical, and it's the nonsense behind the logic that appeals to me."

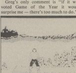
The really refreshing thing about Gargoyle is that they enjoy what they are doing. They like writing games, and they like running a company, not because of the money — although Greg is quick to admit "we wouldn't be in business if we didn't want to be a success" — but because of the challenge.

When they started, however, what they really wanted to do was to write business software.

"We wrote games first of all so we could afford to get a commercial development machine to write business programs on — but we never bought the machine," muses Roy.

Business software's loss is games software's gain. *Tir Na Nog* has been nominated as Game of the Year in the Computer Trade Association Awards, and Roy Carter has been nominated as Leisure Programmer of 1984.

Greg's only comment is "if it wasn't voted Game of the Year it wouldn't surprise me — there's too much to do." □



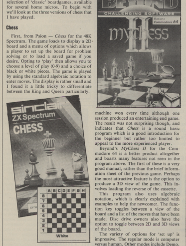
Classic games for your micro

*The silicon chip squares off against the traditional board game — **Sally Glover** reports.*

THIS MONTH I've been given a good selection of 'classic' boardgames, available for several home micros. To begin with we'll look at the three versions of chess that I have played.

Chess

First, from Psion — *Chess* for the 48K Spectrum. The game loads to display a 2D board and a menu of options which allows a player to set up the board for problem solving or to load a saved game if you desire. Opting to 'play' then allows you to choose a level of play (0-9) and a choice of black or white pieces. The game is played by using the standard algebraic notation to enter moves. The display is rather small and I found it a little tricky to differentiate between the King and Queen particularly.



As a comparison for all three chess programs I used the Fidelity Sensory 9 chess computer with a proven ELO rating of about 1500 as a standard. I played three games, Fidelity versus Psion's *Chess* with the chess machine on level one (instant response) and the program on level five (response two to five minutes). The chess machine won every time although one session produced an entertaining end game. The result was not surprising though, and indicates that *Chess* is a sound basic program which is a good introduction for the beginner but rather too limited to appeal to the more experienced player.

Beyond's *MyChess II* for the Commodore 64 is a better product altogether and boasts many features not seen in the program above. The first of these is a very good manual, rather than the brief information sheet of the previous game. Perhaps the most attractive feature is the option to produce a 3D view of the game. This involves loading the reverse of the cassette.

This program also uses algebraic notation, which is clearly explained with examples to help the newcomer. The function key toggles between a view of the board and a list of the moves that have been made. Disc drive owners also have the option to toggle between 2D and 3D views of the board.

The variety of options for 'set up' is impressive. The regular mode is computer versus human. Other modes include Demo, Players (human versus human), Solvemate (search for mate in a given number of moves) and Automatic where the program plays itself.

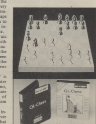
There are too many other features, including hint, take back and so on, to cover fully in this brief review but it is clear that disc drive owners have many options not open to cassette users, particularly the 128 historic games which can be loaded and replayed from the B side of the disc.

The nine level game program itself is much stronger than the Psion *Chess* game for the Spectrum and was able to force the Fidelity to a draw on two occasions. Personally, I found the 2D option easiest for play since the pieces in 3D are very difficult to tell apart, even if you use the 'turn board' facility and view from the side.

Overall, though, *MyChess II* is a good, solid program with many features (also found on the more expensive dedicated chess computers) that will be a boon to the developing player and quite challenging to the more experienced. The package is very good value for money — especially for disc drive owners!

Finally, Psions *QL-Chess* which shows most of the features of *MyChess II* but has a brief 'handbook' similar to the Spectrum version. This time, though, this is not a disadvantage as everything is laid out clearly and in logical order. The game has an 'easy' mode where the computer cannot 'think' while you are considering your move. There is also the facility to have the program dump a hard copy of the game to printer.

The game itself has both 2D and 3D options but, unlike the *MyChess* program, the 3D version is very, very smooth, a real



joy to behold as the pieces, clearly shown, seem to glide around the board.

The real strength of *QL-Chess* is in the program itself, the winner of the World Microcomputer Championship. It boasts no less than 14 levels of play ranging from novice, where the program plays more weakly if it is winning, to Championship with infinite response time. Playing the game at Tournament level (equivalent to level 10 of *QL-Chess)* resulted in five games against the Fidelity being drawn.

QL-Chess then, is an excellent program that should suit all players from the novice upwards. The serious chess player might even consider buying the QL rather than a dedicated chess computer.

Othello

Now a classic from more recent times, *Reversi* — or *Othello*.

Two players use an eight by eight grid (like a chess board) and twin sided counters — one side black, one side white. The object is to dominate as many squares as possible with your own colour by 'capturing' your opponent's pieces, causing them to be turned over to show your colour. The game continues until neither player can make a move. If it sounds a little complicated when written down, just watch the sample game in the pack before you buy to help you make up your mind.

The graphics with the game are rather poor consisting of red circles depicting white counters and red discs for black, but the game it plays is very strong — I was totally unable to beat it even after reading the note on hints and strategy in the instruction leaflet. *Othello* is one of those games it takes a few minutes to learn and a lifetime to master. To help in this, though, the program has the facility to set up games at any stage like the problem solving modes in chess.

Reversi is a very strong program badly let down by poor graphics that would probably soon lose your interest.

The next classic of this month is *Backgammon*, another program from Psion for the Spectrum.

Backgammon

The game is about 3000 years old and involves men (rather like draught pieces) on a board consisting of 24 'points' arranged in four 'tables' of six each. The number of spaces moved each turn is decided by a dice throw. The first player to move all his pieces off the board is the winner. This sounds pretty simple with a high chance element but there is one snag. . .

Two dice are thrown and you can use the throw to move two pieces or the same piece twice — throwing a double gives you four moves. You cannot move a piece onto a point occupied by two or more enemy pieces (a block). If you land on a single enemy this piece is 'hit' and removed from the board. Your opponent must use his next throw to bring the piece back into play on your home table. If he cannot do this because he is blocked, the move is forfeit. So you can see the game has very strong tactical elements too.

The Spectrum version of the game offers four levels of play and the option to throw your own dice if you think the machine is cheating — perhaps it was coincidence but it always seemed to throw a double when it was in trouble! The display is very clear and, as the program is written in machine code, the responses are almost instant.

Backgammon, or at least this version, is very addictive and I was soon carried away, building blocks and cursing the machine's good fortune. Most enjoyable and available on both cassette and rom cartridge.

Scrabble

I'm sure that *Scrabble* is a game that doesn't need much introduction from me as it is seen in toyshops worldwide and has spawned countless TV quizzes. For any that haven't played though, the object is to use the seven letter tiles at your disposal each turn to join with the letter tiles already laid to form a new word for which points are scored. The words laid down must appear in the chosen reference dictionary. Play continues until all times have been laid or the players decide to call a halt — usually when they are left with a handful of unusable letters. Certain squares improve the value of various words and letters.

When play stops, the value of a player's unplayed tiles is subtracted from the total they have accumulated throughout the game. The player with the most points is the winner.

Up to four players can try Sinclair's *Scrabble* on any of its four levels and games can be saved for later reloading.

As far as I can see there are no options denied the computer *Scrabbler* that the conventional player might use. You can shuffle the tiles about on your rack, change them all or note the value and distribution of the pieces. The 11,000 word plus 'dictionary' in the program allows many words to be checked and accepted by the computer but the more outlandish sugestions will be challenged. The machine is quite happy to believe you if you tell it the word is valid — don't be tempted to cheat though!

Playing the game is very easy. Just use the cursor keys to choose the position for the first letter of your word, and type A or D depending on whether the word is to run across or down the board. Then just type it in. The computer won't let you use letters you don't have or position words incorrectly. The only difficulty I experienced was in making out the premium letter and word squares — they seem tiny even by Spectrum standards.

In summary, I had a lot of fun with *Scrabble* and, if you're keen on this sort of game, it is good value for money. A nice, well programmed game.

Next month I shall be looking at the ancient games of *Go* and *Kalah* and computer versions of *Monopoly, Cluedo, Kensington* and *Bridge* (not Tony, although he's a classic too). □

Underground Empire

In the first of his series on Infocom adventures, ***Ken Matthews*** *pun-ishes Zork I and Zork II*

OFTEN in scientific research it is necessary to use a 'reference material' — a standard against which all new and unknown materials could be measured. When developing my love–hate relationship with adventure games on my Atari I happily discovered an analogy in that gênre — the Infocom Adventure.

Any company producing an all text adventure that is placed in the top seller lists of the vast American market is worthy of note. Any company whose titles do so regularly and seem to remain there permanently is truly remarkable. Infocom is a truly remarkable company.

Adventure is, to me, too restrictive a term for an Infocom title — each is an experience, limited only by your imagination. They are characterised by being all-text but have a vocabulary of around 2000 words and a command analyser that handles inputs like "take all the books except the black one and burn them" with contemptuous ease and devastating speed. Location descriptions and the results of some actions may run to several screen pages of text. Many, many times I have sat back from the machine shaking with laughter at the extraordinary humour of some of the comments I've received from the programme. This originality and humour is carried over into their advertising and game aids which are both lavish and brilliant in concept and execution.

I could go on for pages singing the praises of these epics of adventure but I must get on with the job of giving those of you already converted the help you'll undoubtedly need — because above all else, Infocom games are generally tough. To the rest of you I'll just say if you haven't tried one do it! you'll be richer for the experience.

A couple of points before we begin. In any Infocom adventure you need all senses (including the sixth!); manipulate and examine carefully everything you may come across — it may cost you dear or may just save your life. Remember that location descriptions are lavish and much detail is included for atmosphere and effect so don't spend too much time trying to figure out what to do in a particular place unless you're sure you must do something to progress. . .

Zork I sets us out in reasonably tranquil surroundings, near a secluded woodland house, and you might begin by taking a little stroll around the woods and riverside — it might be the last daylight you see for a while!



Entering the house you'll soon find all the items you need to begin the quest in earnest — what's a grue? — don't ask me — ask the program. The way forward is down, so put your back into it and beat that rug!

All aglow? — get yourself bloodied! — it's easier than you might think and allows access to almost all of the Underground Empire.

By all means explore the caverns thoroughly and drink in the wealth of description, but be prepared to lose anything you might pick up to the rather pragmatic thief — even if you put up a fight. Still, I'm sure he's a deft and careful lock-pick. . .

Moving on, after a short drop, might see you at the doors of Hell with a heavy burden and another light source — it might seem you don't have a prayer(?) — you could try a little exorcise instead.

You should be back at the house now with some treasures and nowhere to put them but — just in case you've forgotten something, be sceptrecal and remember that waves go with water and rain is water and. . .

Damn and blast? — not so easy but still quite simple, just find the right button and success is just a turn away!

A short while later and it's time to get your feet wet, or at least a little muddy. The next few moves are simplicity itself and most profitable. If you want to add to your collection you might get really tactile with a mirror or perhaps just let things (and you?) slide a bit.

It could be the time, or at least opportune, to make a little ride — provided you now have the means to explode something — or do I mean blow it up? This part is a little tricky although full instructions are given — if you can manage it you should feel buoyed up by your success.

Having done all the easy parts, it's now time to get to the nitty gritty — don't turn up your nose, try to get someone else to turn up theirs! Voila! Haute Cuisine? Phew! That's got round it.

You may well find your light source has become lethal! So it's back to the battery back-up. Leave the torch somewhere safe or you might end up a basket case (?) trying to find it again. And so to the bottom of the mine and a squeeze much too tight for anything more than you alone, so if you need to get things by — think back to the top of the shaft and let a little light down on the subject. Now things will be a lot clearer and you should be able to change some carbon from one allotrope to another with just one more "turn".

Last, but by no means least, we must return to the maze. You may or may not be able to recover all of the treasures you've passed on the tour of *Zork* due to the limits of strength and the wanderings of the surly thief. If you've got all you can, store them and equip yourself with as many other items as possible before going in the maze.

Hopefully, if you've progressed to *Zork* you won't need help in mapping mazes. However, you need to be patient as a certain nefarious character pursues you through this one moving the items you've dropped — don't forget there are ten directions in which you can move. One last hurdle — a relic from Greek mythology. There are two ways past him, either satisfy the inner man, or cyclops, or perhaps you could study the book a little more closely for a clue to a more beneficial solution —



this clue could be a myth however.

Now — the showdown! — it will be unlike any other battle you have ever fought; the excitement builds, description is excellent though seldom repetitive and it is by no means certain you will win, although if you've scored enough points you'll have the upper hand.

Once your arch-foe is defeated you can gather the rest of the treasure and any items you had 'lost' and return them to the case. Oh yes! Is the canary winding you up? — get your own back — in the right place of course.

Still one problem? — try leaving the dam how you found it and, if you get there quickly, things should quieten down a bit.

Just the last door to close and a close look should show you the way through to. . .

Zork II — The Wizard of Frobozz was the part of the trilogy I found the most difficult. It was eventually solved after some nudging in the right direction from fellow Atari Adventurers Sherry Ward of Norwich and Liz Armedzi of Chatham.

The game begins where *Zork I* leaves off. You don't need to have played *Zork I* first but perhaps some of the atmosphere and 'in - jokes' might be a little lost on the newcomer.

Starting *Zork II* is plain sailing and you should soon cross the ford and make your way to a picturesque underground garden without needing your lamp. You needn't collect all the stuff you find in the gazebo just yet, merely examine it and think where the item could be used. From the topiary you can light your lamp and begin to explore in earnest.

A bit off balance in the carousel room? Don't worry for now, I'm sure you'll deal with it later. Just remember there are eight exits and try to map as many as you can. It seems that there are treasures to collect somewhere — try the hard bit first and start with the bank!

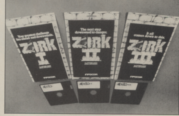
Experienced *Zork*ers will know that magic abounds in the Empire of Frobozz and the bank is one example found in *Zork II*. This time it's not all done by mirrors but by curtains — I'm sure you'll see what I mean. Read the free clue sheet carefully and see where you end up considering where you entered the Depository — you can enter from all four directions — if you found and solved the small (but roomy) problem, your face should be a picture. The brochure tells all, just do like the teller and you will be rewarded on your next trip through the curtain.

You'll have to leave empty-handed at first but don't panic, just remember the last bit and try again!

Now you should have encountered a nasty dragon and a wall of ice — if only you had a flame thrower? Perhaps, with a little persistence in your attacks you could obtain one or at least get things moving in the right direction.

A sleeping woman? — seems familiar — be a little amourous then follow her lead to get your real reward.

If you're stuck at a locked (and unguarded) door just think back to childhood comics and take a close look into the keyhole — remembering the gazebo might help as well.



Next a flight of fancy or a fancy flight? M Montgolfier would have been quite at home with the receptacle and a couple of items from the gazebo. The case of ups and downs is simply open and shut but don't forget to tie up those loose ends.

The only problem in this part is in a dusty room, you could try bricking up the hole but check your fuses before this crowning achievement!

Stumped by a riddle now? Well, well! I think you should get that without any help. Have a nice cup of tea while you think about it and you should soon be able to pour all your troubles away.

At last — a helping hand, so make use of it in a tight spot for starters and get your problems lifted from your shoulders. Just before you leave make sure your friend gets things in shape for you. It might seem strange but a little thudding could prevent some dizzy mix ups later.

On your own again? Some glass could diminish the magnifying snags and save you from a lot of tears.

By now you should be ready for the final challenge of the game and face to face with an ominous looking lizard who seems to be considering you as lunch — unless you can offer an alternative!

So, to the centre of things in the Wizard's Workshop and time to examine the items therein and discover you may just be a sphere short. The Wizard's quarters should divert you for a while till you reach the clear conclusion.

If you're going to tackle a certain serpent make sure you keep a little distance between you and it or it won't be him making his last gasp. If you do succeed the end should be clearer still.

It's time to take control by putting it all on the line or inside them. The result will be a little startling but take heart — you might be able to win him over if you've managed to pick your way through the rest of the game and gathered a few valuable 'trifles'. Thus you can usurp the source of the Wizard's power.

Make use of your new found power straight away, to get rid of the game's real heavy weight and recover the last item you'll need to finish.

You take a little break from your labours before the home straight by trying a home run in the style of the famous 'Babe' Flathead. You will recall that baseball is played on a 'diamond' — if you've picked the right route, it'll all be looking brighter move by move until the way forward is revealed.

The last few steps shouldn't be too difficult once you've tamed the pooch. Your trusty lamp should be fading now but, if you're at a dead end, try giving you and it a rest — you might find that just a little illuminating too!

Before I sign off for this month, I'll mention just one more facet of the Infocom experience — when you've finished the adventure, don't just put it to one side with the pride you should justifiably feel — go back over some of the points you've discovered and the characters you've met. You are sure to have missed several interesting and amusing points, even if it's only a new way to die. An invaluable aid in this 'mopping up' is the Infocom Invisiclues book and map which are now available at about £7.00 from the best adventure stockists. The production is, as usual, very lavish and in many ways a natural extension of the game. I was given a secondhand guide to *Zork II* and *III* after I'd finished them (honest!) and I was amazed at the subtleties and nuances I'd missed. For example in *Zork II* you might try giving a treasure to the Dragon, kissing the Wizard or Dragon, reading the bills, coins and stamps or squeezing things.

That's it for now so, I look forward to seeing you all next month when I shall cover *Zork III*, *Enchanter* and *Sorcerer*, or, if my clues above aren't enough to get you through, hearing from you on the Adventureline on 0474-334008.

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Adventurous Journey

***Tony Bridge** wends his way through Temptation's The Journey*

THE JOURNEY is a real-time text adventure with graphics, in which your quest is to seek out the legendary White Ship of the Elves and be carried to a distant land where your true destiny as an adventurer may be fulfilled ... Little Newport Street, perhaps?

The author, Alan Davis, has always been interested in character inter-reaction, and this is a strong feature of the program.

The adventure runs in real time, so that, should the player sit doing nothing, the world around will carry on with its affairs; odd characters will wander past as you wonder what to do, and, if you're not quick enough in typing in a command, it's quite possible that these characters will wander off before you can KILL, KICK or ROB them! And as well as other characters having a life of their own, they may be affected by the player — for example, one character may be directed to fight another if the player is too weak or prudent to undertake the task himself: and another character's inventory may be requested.

From all this, it may seem that fighting is all there is to *The Journey* — not so! Since my piece on this adventure in the *Popular Computing Weekly* of 1st November, I've revised my opinins somewhat, and realised that the character inter-reaction is of a much higher standard than the usual random "Fred appears and starts wingeing on about spinach". This sort of thing is just window-dressing and not usually of much help, although there are, of course, notable exceptions.

Playing through *The Journey* is not going to be possible without a lot of help from the other characters. Right from the very start, you must get the inhabitants of this fantasy world on your side. One of the main ways of doing this is to find and hand back to their rightful owners several objects, such as the Wizard's Wand. This will ensure their co-operation in fighting on your behalf. Finding gold coins and making a donation to The Orchard ensures a supply of fruit to eat — otherwise, you have to wait for the Orchard-keeper to come along and open the door, after which the player has one minute to get in and out again. As a final example, the Warrior will become increasingly impressed by your prowess at fighting and can then be used to clobber the more horrible monsters. Beware, though! If you beg his aid too often, he'll walk off in disgust. Combat is pretty important, at least in the first half of *The Journey*, being accomplished in several rounds, with the monster, we hope, becoming weaker until dead. There is no 'repeat action' function, however, and it is quite a chore to type in something like **'tell Warrior fight Dragon'** three or four times.

Another aspect of all this is that characters can be called — the further away they happen to be, of course, the longer they will take to arrive, so it is probably a good idea to journey *en masse*.

As you can see from the character names, the land of *The Journey* is very like a medieval Middle Earth, with lots of juicy locations, objects and puzzles, all of which are greatly enhanced by the character's movement and actions.

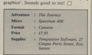
The graphics, unfortunately, don't add much, although they are colourful — but they're also pretty slowly-drawn, and it's a pity that there is no 'OFF' option.

The predilection of the author may be seen in the Status table which can be called up at will — your character (and indeed, all the others) possesses three attributes: Intelligence, Strength and Experience, each of which will be affected as play progresses, sometimes decreasing and sometimes increasing. Completion of this adventure is going to take quite some time, so there is a high-speed SAVE and LOAD facility available.

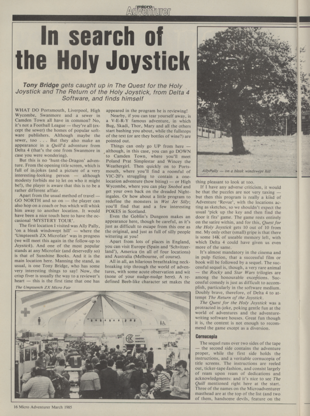
As I said before, other characters will go about their business while you decide what to do — in practise, the flashing input cursor at the bottom of the screen stays active for about 20 seconds, after which time, control is taken away from the player for a couple of seconds, while all the other creatures of this world are given their turn. This isn't too much of a hardship, though, as all the player has to do is type in one letter, and then can go away and make a cup of tea, secure in the knowledge that the program will wait "4E4" (as Phipps would say) for the ENTER key to be pressed. If you don't want to "fiddle" the game mechanics in this way, just sit back and wait while the program says things like **"You twiddle your thumbs.."** or **"You hum a little tune.."**. The response time, is a little long, so that you will be tapping your fingers quite a lot!

There is a lot of atmosphere in *The Journey*, with runic codes to be deciphered (EXAMINE everything, as clues to the code are likely to turn up anywhere!) and those cursed characters wandering in and out all the time — and Alan Davis has kindly included, on the cassette inlay, a complete list of the words you'll need (or synonyms thereof) to complete the adventure. So no more wondering how to open a door; if the word isn't in the list, you're on the wrong track anyway. The usual verb-noun combination (get sword) is recognised, but in certain cases the player may type in up to four words, or 32 characters. I would say that this is a good compromise between the inflexibility of a mere two words, and the overkill of 256 characters — I hardly ever use sentences like "Take the magic sword and then very carefully kill the Goblin, before running cautiously through the woodland glen and taking the Golden Helmet"!

So, *The Journey* is a pretty good marriage of a bloody Hack and Slay Quest-adventure and a good puzzleventure. In my original review, I felt that the adventure was a little old-fashioned — well, it *does* remind me of some older programs, but there is nothing wrong with that. This is Davis' first programming exercise (that I'm aware of) and now that the hard work is out of the way, I look forward to his next release — he tells me that it will use much of the techniques learnt here, with 40 intelligent characters and full 'landscaping graphics'. Sounds good to me! □



Adventure	:	*The Journey*
Micro	:	*Spectrum 48K*
Format	:	*Cassette*
Price	:	*£7.95*
Supplier	:	*Temptation Software, 27 Cinque Ports Street, Rye, Sussex*



In search of the Holy Joystick

***Tony Bridge** gets caught up in The Quest for the Holy Joystick and The Return of the Holy Joystick, from Delta 4 Software, and finds himself*

WHAT DO Portsmouth, Liverpool, High Wycombe, Swanmore and a sewer in Camden Town all have in common? No, it's not a Football League — they're all (except the sewer) the homes of popular software publishers. Although maybe the sewer, too . . . But they also make an appearance in a *Quill*'d adventure from Delta 4 (that's the one from Swanmore in case you were wondering).

But this is no 'hunt-the-Dragon' adventure. From the opening title screen, which is full of in-jokes (and a picture of a very interesting-looking person — although modesty forbids me to let on who it might be!), the player is aware that this is to be a rather different affair.

Apart from the usual method of travel — GO NORTH and so on — the player can also hop on a coach or bus which will whisk him away to another location. It would have been a nice touch here to have the occasional 'MYSTERY TOUR'.

The first location I visited was Ally Pally, 'on a bleak windswept hill' — where the 'Umpteenth ZX Microfair' was in progress (we will meet this again in the follow-up to *Joystick*). And one of the most popular stands at any Microfair (and deservedly so) is that of Sunshine Books. And it is the main location here. Manning the stand, as usual, is one Tony Bridge, who has some very interesting things to say! Now, the crisp fiver is usually the way to a reviewer's heart — this is the first time that one has appeared in the program he is reviewing!

Nearby, if you can tear yourself away, is a V-E-R-Y famous adventure, in which Bug, Skadi, Thor, Mary and all the others start bashing you about, while the fullstops of the text (or are they bottles of wine?) are pointed out.

Things can only go UP from here — although, in this case, you can go DOWN to Camden Town, where you'll meet Poland Prat Simplestar and Wincey the Weathergirl. Then quickly on to Portsmouth, where you'll find a roomful of VIC-20's struggling to contain a one-location adventure (how biting) — or High Wycombe, where you can play *Snobol* and get your own back on the dreaded Nightingales. Or how about a little program to redefine the monsters in *Wet Jet Silly*; you'll find that and a few interesting POKES in Scotland.

Even the Goblin's Dungeon makes an appearance here, though be careful, as it's just as difficult to escape from this one as the original, and just as full of silly people wittering at you!

Apart from lots of places in England, you can visit Europe (Spain and 'Schvitzerland'), America (in all of four locations) and Australia (Melbourne, of course).

All in all, an hilarious breathtaking neck-breaking trip through the world of adventures, with some acute observation and wit (none of your nudge-nudge here). A redefined Beeb-like character set makes the thing pleasant to look at too.

The Umpteenth ZX Micro Fair

AllyPally — on a bleak windswept hill

If I have any adverse criticism, it would be that the puzzles are not very taxing — but then this program is really a kind of Adventure 'Revue', with the locations acting as sketches, so we shouldn't expect the usual 'pick up the key and then find the door it fits' game. The game rests entirely on the satire within, and for this, *Quest for the Holy Joystick* gets 10 out of 10 from me. My only other (small) gripe is that there is some 14K of useable memory left, with which Delta 4 could have given us even more of the same.

It's almost mandatory in the cinema and in pulp fiction, that a successful film or book will be followed by a sequel. The successful sequel is, though, a very rare animal — the *Rocky* and *Star Wars* trilogies are among the honourable exceptions. Successful comedy is just as difficult to accomplish, particularly in the software medium. Doubly brave, therefore, of Delta 4 to attempt *The Return of the Joystick*.

The Quest for the Holy Joystick was a protracted in-joke, poking gentle fun at the world of adventures and the adventure-writing software houses. Great fun though it is, the content is not enough to recommend the game except as a diversion.

Cornucopia

The sequel runs over two sides of the tape — the second side contains the adventure proper, while the first side holds the instructions, and a veritable cornucopia of title screens. The instructions are reeled out, ticker-tape fashion, and consist largely of ream upon ream of dedications and acknowledgments: and it's nice to see *The Quill* mentioned right here at the start. Three of the names on the Microadventurer masthead are at the top of the list (and two of them, handsome devils, feature on the



cassette cover) along with just about all Delta 4's friends, neighbours and family, as well as Mel Croucher and Christian Penfold of Automata, the Thompson Twins, Gandalf and Swanmore Mental Hospital (which doesn't surprise me!).

After the instructions, a series of title screens are loaded separately — each one a brilliant pastiche of famous title-screens from adventures and arcade games. Among the ten you'll find *Chublock Homes, Sabre Wilf* (from Intimate Play the Gay), *Flashman* (from Old Generation Hogwash). *Allahlav, Dreery Gulch* and *The Gobbit* (complete with cross-eyed Smaug). I don't know which utility has been used to compose these screens, but they are all sensational and a lot of loving care has obviously been expended on each one. The collection alone is worth the price of the cassette.

But on to the adventure itself, which is probably the first commercially available product of *The Illustrator*, Gilsoft's graphic utility for use with *The Quill*. Delta 4 have, like many other authors, redesigned the Spectrum's character set, and this makes the text nice and chunky, with occasional messages set in a futuristic computer font. Restraint has been used in the screen design, with plain black text on a white screen, leaving the illustrations to provide the colour — all in all, an attractive-looking adventure.

Starting off halfway up the hill to Alexandra Palace in North London, which by now will be familiar to those thousands who have attended Mike Johnson's ZX Microfair over the years, there is a Long Sword and a Radio. You can GET both, and LISTEN to the Radio, which emits an unholy screech — sorry, a record by the Wham sisters (?!). The Sword emits a pulsing glow, acting as a light source. These are among the few objects you can get in the game (that I have so far come across), although other objects may be manipulated, as we shall see.

The Microfair lies to the North, but you will not be able to go there at first. Why not? Well, it's closed, of course, and won't open until 10 am — each game turn uses up a certain amount of time (although you are told at the end of the game how long you have taken, I keep forgetting to make the calculation), and eventually the Fair will open, allowing you entrance (without paying or queuing, which is a novelty!).

Fatal

Taking one of the other routes is immediately fatal, but this is one of Delta 4's nudge in the adventurer's rib, and at least they have got it out of the way at the very start, unlike some adventures — although at a later stage I was killed off pretty sharpish by a passing penguin. Maybe I'd wandered into a game of *Pengo*! Other directions are not so unwelcoming, and mapping is easily carried out (although Delta 4's geographical knowledge of London leaves something to be desired — Richmond EAST of Ally Pally?).

While there are not many 'found' objects, there *are* plenty of other characters wandering about, and these will impart such wisdom as: 'Hi!' and 'Hello there!'. There is some variation; Christian Penfold and others will sometimes say 'Fascist!'. Most of the characters mentioned in the introduction will be met (although Gandalf can't be followed!), and one or two of them serve a special purpose, though I'd be giving away more than I should if I told you any more.

Much of the player's time can be spent wandering around several software houses, as in *The Quest of the Holy Joystick*, and in general, it seems a good idea to EXAMINE everything — worth doing in any adventure anyway.

There is rather more to do at Sunshine House; there, among the piles of cassettes, lie a couple of computers, which can be loaded with adventures like the Thompson Twins epic and Lords of Midnight, and games like Sabre Wilf and Jyramania. These diversions are brilliant parodies of the games, most of which are just two or three locations and an illustration or two.

The longest, as befits the object of the fun, is *Snobol*, in which the player can wander round and round the corridors and into the Pleasure Dome. Nothing of any consequence happens in these little cameos, except in *Chublock*, where you may find something in a cupboard. This can be taken out of the game-withit-a-game into the main adventure, but what function it may perform there, I don't know yet.

Looking back, you'll see that my main criticism of *Quest* is that there is nothing much to do but chuckle quietly and knowingly at the in-jokes about the adventuring world. It was good, therefore, to see that *Return* is much deeper — I can't pretend to know, yet, what the final outcome may be (Delta 4 aren't letting on, boohoo), but Fergus McNeill, one of the co-authors, gave me just enough hints at what lay hidden to me to whet my appetite for more. Suffice to say that Tony Bridge has more than a passing hand in the outcome of the adventure!

What more could an adventure addict want? An overwhelming series of title screens, and a tough, absorbing adventure containing brilliant pastiches of other games and a myriad of passing references to typical adventure situations which will strike a chord in everyone's heart. Great value for money (£4.95 for all this?) □

KJC GAMES

PRESENT

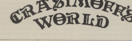
Earth Wood

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Mud's wonderful wizards

***Richard Bartle** introduces another selection of characters from the Land of Mud.*

I THOUGHT this month I'd continue my series of articles on *MUD* with a few more embarrassing, anecdotal descriptions of players who have made their mark in the original Essex University version of the game. Five of the characters this time are wizs, the other three are arch-wizards. The prefix "arch-" here is granted only to those who have actually written a piece of the program which is *MUD* itself, and since there are only four of us, I decided I'd let you know something about the others (actually there's a fifth arch-wiz, DEBUGGER, which is used by JEZ, SUE and occasionally EGOR, in cases when none of the rest of us are around but where arch-wiz powers are required). I hope that after you have read this, any wrong impressions you may have picked up from earlier articles that I am the sole person responsible for the game will now be rectified!

There is no doubt that without Roy Trubshaw, ROY the arch-wizard, there can have been no *MUD*. *MUD* was Roy's idea, and Roy did all the ground work. He provided the basis of the system, I made it into a proper game.

The story of *MUD's* development will have to wait until another article — this one is about the people who have influenced the game. No-one can have done so more than the person who invented it, and that's why I'm starting off with ROY.

Roy the Arch Wizard

So what's the man like? Few latter-day *MUD* players have seen him, although he does make an appearance one or twice a year. Well the first thing to note about ROY is that he's filthy rich, a side-effect of contract-programming in Belgium for the past three or four years on a £25,000 salary after tax (swoon!). If I can drag him to the *Micro Adventurer* offices next time he's in Britain, maybe they'll get a photo of him and you can see what he looks like. Knowing their photographic skills, though, you'll probably have to wait . . .

Roy's main interest is low-level computer work. Not as low as BRIAN (see later), but much lower than the stuff I tend to prefer. Roy's an expert in all kinds of DEC equipment, and could probably build and program a PDP11 from scratch. Yes, THAT'S why they pay him so much!

It's difficult to list the contributions to *MUD* which ROY has made, because he wrote the foundations for everything. Even some of the most advanced, sophisticated things you can do in *MUD*, like snooping or conversing, were built out of functions designed by Roy. I estimate that about 25% of *MUD* is his code, but it's the most important and difficult part, which made my job on the rest of it that much easier!

Of all the arch-wizards. ROY is the one best-suited to the job as he's always been one. Even I was once a mortal, believe it or not, but not ROY. Indeed, there was no way mortals could reach wiz when ROY left Essex University to seek his (considerable!) fortune, all that was my doing later on. It's just as well he DOES only return a couple of times a year these days, actually, as his fame and stature in the game among the players are so great that people can hardly believe it's him they're talking to, and come out with disjointed, mistyped, barely-intelligible garbage stricken as they are by awe of him.

This is all vaguely embarrassing to ROY, who still finds it almost impossible to believe that people think his modest efforts are worth paying British Telecom a fortune to play. He'll probably try and buy every copy of this magazine which finds its way into Belgium, too, so none of his work-mates read any of my praising him to the gods . . .!

Roy and I will be slaving over a new *MUD* by the time you read this, but whether we finish it or not is another matter. After working on the original *MUD* for four years, though, I think it's about tiem I put my feet up. This time I'll be the one who writes 25%, and he can do the rest! Well, fair's fair, isn't it?

Of the four arch-wizards, only RONAN actually worked his way up through the ranks, the rest of us just made ourselves wizards. RONAN is his real name, by the way (he's Irish), and the persona he used to reach wiz was SHADOW. RONAN's claim to being an arch-wiz is based on about a page of code which made it easier for *MUD* to load in a newly-compiled database (or rather it made it easier for me to make *MUD* load it). It was one of those finicky jobs I'd meant to do for ages, but was put off by the awesome tedious aspects of it. RONAN's proven ability to digest entire manuals of mostly irrelevant information, sift out the usable bits, and then pains-takingly try to force a program to do what the manual says it should, made his offer to write this bit of *MUD* too good to refuse.

RONAN's wiz career started a couple of years before he finally left the university (to program DEC-20's at Liverpool Poly). He and FELICITY together cooked up the idea of berserkers, which I incorporated into *MUD* at their request. Indeed, I think RONAN's berserk persona, DARIUS, was the first to reach the highest rank of berserker wizard, although he's been killed quite a few times since then!

RONAN was a highly respected wiz, noted for his no-nonsense, business-like approach to the game. He was excellent at managing spectaculars, and was fair and just (with a wry sense of humour — he perfected the art of erecting strange obstacles to players' progress, and delighted in watching them try to figure out what was happening).

The other point to note about RONAN is that he is just about the only internal wiz who was neither a member of the University Computing Society nor a user of other students' accounts ("naughty numbers"). All the time he spent in *MUD* came from his own, limited, academic computer time, which he should have spent sprucing up his programming assignments. Hmm, yes, I think that just about sums him up: he has formidable programming abilities (he never handed one in late), integrity (there are few internals who

haven't "borrowed" a friend's account) and, of course, an addiction to *MUD* . . .

BRIAN the arch-wizard, or "Tubs" to his friends, won his spurs by writing some code for *MUD* which enabled it to be interrupted by another program. Essex *MUD* is only developmental, you see, and it occasionally, well, it sort of, well, hangs around in infinite loops ("deadlock" in operating systems talk). People are sitting around at keyboards with the interrupts off, and none of them are being serviced. *MUD* has an ancillary program, RESET, which, if you run it, chucks everyone out of the game. That chucking out stuff was written by BRIAN.

It's now superseded to a large extent, since *MUD* has become full of error-checking routines, and is presently reasonably aware when it has crashed, so it can dump everyone out itself. Still, BRIAN was a great help to ROY and I in *MUD's* early days, so his status remains.

BRIAN's secondary wiz name is DEGRIZ, after Harry Harrison's Simon Bolivar DeGriz, the Stainless Steel Rat. No, nobody knows WHY it's from there, it just IS. In real life, Tubs tries very hard to be normal, but labours under two monumental handicaps. First is what he calls his "efficient metabolism", which means that his body is so good at extracting the goodness from food that it gets out too much, and it has to be stored somewhere in fatty tissue (hence his nickname . . .). The second problem which he has not yet solved is that he has such a splendidly impish sense of humour, and innocent, harmless-looking face, that absolutely no-one ever takes him at all seriously.

BRIAN simply ADORES computers. He's a hacker in the true sense of the word. Nothing pleases him more than getting a new machine and leaping elbow-deep into the operating system software to hack around. He'll instantly try to crash any mainframe brought near him, and if he can get the back off any computer, big or small, it'll probably be days before you next see him (and the machine will never be quite the same again, either!). He's still mildly amazed that people will pay him to do this sort of thing, when really he'd expect to pay them — it's so much fun!

I've still not decided which of *MUD's* wiz's is the greater slob, BRIAN or Simon Dally (who plays as CENTURY the wizard). I think BRIAN has it, though — anyone whose idea of shaving is pulling the longest whiskers out by hand and dropping them all around him must surely reign supreme . . .!

The name of FOXY the wizard lives on in *MUD* not because of the way he made it to wiz, but because of the way he didn't. An internal, FOXY spent many long hours clawing his way up through the ranks. He always behaved impeccably, only killing people in self defence (well, NEARLY always!), and he knew the game inside out by virtue of enormous *MUD* sessions lasting all the daylight hours entire weekends. Everyone agreed that if anyone deserved to reach wiz at all, then that person was FOXY. It was merely a case of mistaken identity one assumes, when five people ambushed him in the graveyard and killed him with less than 300 to go of the 102,400 points needed to reach wiz.

Foxy the Wizard

The self-control exhibited by FOXY in not jumping from the nearest tall building, or sending letter bombs to all concerned, earned him great respect. He didn't shed a tear, just started again with great dignity and killed three or four of the rotten bastards with a handy sword, thoughtfully provided by a sympathetic wizard.

His eventual rise to immortality was not, it turns out, via the normal channels; rather he was elected to wiz for his work on *ROCK*, *MUD's* version of ITV's *Fraggle Rock* TV show. Real name Phil Fox, he's now a teacher at a nearby school, and occasionally returns to hack and slay in *MUD* when the little sods get too much for him. Perhaps memories of what a lot of weak people can do to one strong one prevents his throwing his weight around in the school . . .?

EGOR the wizard was the second external to reach that exalted rank, and also, for quite some time, the youngest. An accomplished programmer, raking in even more a year than ROY does (from royalties on his games), EGOR was sufficiently impressed by what he'd heard of *MUD* from his friend JEZ to give it a try. As usual, *MUD* worked its insidious way into the addiction centres of his brain, and he immediately took to it.

EGOR has an annoying ability to exploit any bugs or feaures he finds in programs. Any fool can unearth a bug — EGOR's skill comes in applying it to maximum effect. *MUD*, of course, was no exception. The duels which he and JEZ used to have, stretching *MUD* to the limits, were pretty exciting to watch, although there's little mortals find more frightening than two mighty wizs battling it out for supremacy above their heads. These duels heralded many changes to the game; for example there used to be a sneaky way you could come in as another player, and when EGOR discovered it, he instantly came on as JEZ. Rather than let on, though, he shouted insults at everyone and picked off a few novices, then quit. When the real JEZ rolled up some time later, he was set upon by an angry mob, and was lucky to escape with his life.

Like all good hackers, EGOR always told me how he did things, so I could patch over the hole (after he'd had his fun . . .). Many of the things I already knew about, and had been trusting people not to do — but EGOR went ahead and did them.

EGOR doesn't play *MUD* too much nowadays, since he has to spend a lot of time programming to keep up his amazing income (and pacify his agent!). Also, he was indirectly responsible for AZAX getting the wiz mode password when not entitled to it, so was a bit disgusted when he found out. He still pops in from was a bit disgusted when he found out. He still pops in from time to time to say hello and try out some new bug he's thought of on his sparring partner JEZ, although sometimes people think he's back when he isn't (EGOR's real name is Andrew Glaister: when an IGOR turned up a couple of weeks back, everyone welcomed him and happily provided him with the wiz mode password, not realising he was a complete novice, and IGOR was his REAL name!).

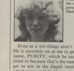
The semi legendary Jez the Wizard

If you had to think of a word to describe AZAX the wizard, that word would surely be "irrepressible". AZAX is a relatively recent wiz, being number 44 on the list of 53, but he has already made a huge impact on the game. He is seemingly driven by the urge to bend as many rules as possible without actually breaking them, and his chosen method to achieve this end is by whinging. Whinge, whinge, whinge, he never stops! On every topic he goes on and on and on! It's amazing, if he wants to know the answer to some questions he'll keep on at you for hours until you give in. He speaks for so long and with so little content that it takes him ten minutes to get out what other peole would phrase as "goodbye". He used so many suspect ploys to get to wiz that no-one would believe he deserved it, and I had to bust him to novice again and make him work his way up from nothing before anyone would reluctantly accept his status among the immortals.

For example, one day he transferred thousands of points to PAULA by kissing her continuously for over four hours. Every time you kiss or hug someone in *MUD* it docks some points off you and gives a generous portion to the person you kissed or hugged. Normally this is about 50

points, but AZAX managed to get rid of 70,000 by repeated kisses (this was before he found out it was the male half of PAULA he was smothering with affection.

Of course, it was enough to put PAULA at witch (and, if it had been in real life, to have put AZAX in hospital!). He then convinced her to flex her new muscles by making him a wiz, too, and kept badgering at her until she yielded, forced by the weight of whinges. OK, so it only took two minutes, but he's pretty persuasive with people he's just assisted! Well I could hardly let it stand, could I, so I had to zap him one. Then I had to disappear for a few days to stop him pestering me every moment of the day.

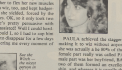
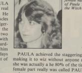
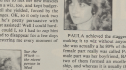
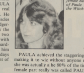
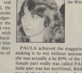
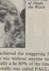


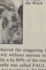
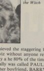
Sue the Witch — the nicest person in Mud

Even as a wiz things aren't much better. He is currently on at me to get a third wiz name, PURITY, which he insists he is entitled to because that's the name he used to get to wiz in the (legal) version of *MUD* which runs at Oslo University in Norway. Myself, JEZ, and SUE have had to show great resiliance to his waves of high-powered whinging, and SUE's fortitutde in particular has been admirable. You have to be careful, though, because when AZAX doesn't get his way he can suddenly snap and throw a mad tantrum. These have to be seen to be believed! He runs amok under some weird name (the last one was KHAN), devastating everything indiscriminately, spreading death and destruction wherever he goes and impervious to any sense of reason. Indeed, even the only person whose words he seems incapable of understanding while in such a state, INNOCENCE the witch, can do little with him until he calms down. You just have to leave him to it and get him afterwards when he returns to comparative normality! The Hulk has nothing on this boy!

This is where his irrepresibility comes in. Despite the awful repercussions which follow such actions, like removing his wizard privileges, changing his password, not speaking to him, or FODding him whenever he appears, he just bounces back as his normal, mischievous self, good ol' irrepressible AZAX. You can't help but admire the way he takes it all on the chin! He's also quite fun, really, and you can't dislike him for long, he's just so enthusiastic all the time. I personally find his rule-bending activities a great help, because at least he tells me about them (well, gloats about them) so I can plug the hole before anyone else exploits it. You can't transfer points by kissing people anymore if they have more than you, for example. Very handy!

For reasons of personal safety I'd better not tell you his name in the non-*MUD* world, but he's a teenage American living in London. Aha, so THAT explains it!

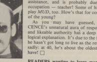





Paula — the female half of Paula the Witch

PAULA achieved the staggering feat of making it to wiz without anyone realising she was actually a he 80% of the time. The female part really was called PAULA, the male part was her boyfriend, BARRY. The two of them formed an excellent partnership, and whereas it is usually the case that a lad pretending to be a lass will be found out, if BARRY got stuck on anything feminine he was supposed to know but didn't, he just summoned PAULA to the terminal and let her handle it. Since his occupation is a photographer, it was a cinch to supply inquisitive players who asked for evidence with photo's of PAULA, who is quite obviously female when you see her (take a look at that group photo again and see, if you don't believe me!).

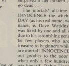
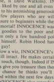
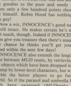
PAULA (also PLONKER, and now DESIREE) plugged the gap in *MUD's* elite left by SUE when she was recovering from her phone bill over the summer, and in effect "ran" the game as senior wiz for a couple of months. Particularly vicious play with berserkers during this period ensured that none but the "best" made it to wiz, although the policy didn't make PAULA too many friends among the "non-best"!



Barry — the more masculine part of Paula

PAULA's secret dual identity was eventually learned by two wizs almost simultaneously. SUE got into a conversation with BARRY about dress sizes while PAULA was elsewhere, and as BARRY knew less than nothing about such matters (can you blame him?) SUE sussed he was male. About the same time, JEZ invited PAULA to tea in London; they agreed, but when they turned up together they had to admit that JEZ's sharp eyes were correct, and that they were indeed two people . . .

PAULA doesn't play too often now, due to the enormity of a certain telephone bill, but should be back with a "midnight line" soon (£100 a quarter, as many calls as you like between midnight and 6am for free). If you ever get into conversation with her about dress sizes, though, don't be too surprised if her modem suddenly seems to go dead . . .

The mortals' all-time favourite wiz is INNOCENCE the witch, also known as DAV (as his real name, well, his non-*MUD* name, is Dave Watkins). INNOCENCE was liked by one and all even as a mortal, due to his astonishing generosity. There can be few players who are willing to give treasure to beginners while they themselves are mortal! INNOCENCE was still dishing out goodies to the poor and needy even when only a few hundred points short of wiz himself. Robin Hood has nothing on this guy!

Now a wiz, INNOCENCE's good nature is still intact. He makes certain he's not a soft touch, though. Indeed if INNOCENCE does give you treasure then there's usually a fair chance he thinks you'll get yourself killed within the next few days!

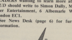
INNOCENCE also extends the length of time between *MUD* resets, by retrieving all the objects which have been dropped in the swamp by lower-level characters, but which enable the better players to go further afield. So if the parasol and umbrella have both been swamped (*MUD*speke for "dropped in the swamp", points having been scored for them), which effectively prevents anyone from getting off the cliff except by the most devious route imaginable, it's INNOCENCE who responds to the mortals' plaintive "wish" commands, and plonks the necessary item where they may at least be able to recover it.

INNOCENCE is also capable of cooling down hot-headed wizs, even AZAX. This ability is looked upon with awe by the other wizs, who have difficulty not getting into an argument with AZAX just by saying "hello, nice day". It is indeed of invaluable assistance, and is probably due to his occupation — teacher! Some of his pupils play *MUD*, too. How's that for corruption of the young?

As you may have guessed, INNOCENCE's unnatural aura of responsibility and likeable authority has a deep psychological explanation. It's due to the fact that he hasn't got long to live as the rest of us, sadly: at 40, he's about the oldest wiz we have! □

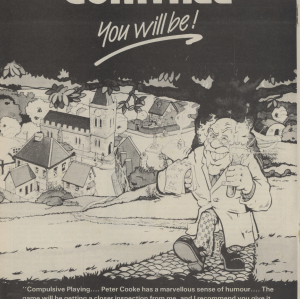
READERS wanting to learn more about *MUD* should write to Simon Dally, Multi User Entertainment, 6 Albemarle Way, London EC1.

See News Desk (page 6) for further information.




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Wotsitallabout? Don't ask us! ask your local games shop!

Alarms and excursions on your micro

*Field Marshall **Noel Williams** assesses the strengths and weaknesses of three micro wargames — Eclipse Software's Legionnaire, US Gold's Combat Leader and Lothlorien's Panzer Attack*

IF YOU'VE EVER written a wargame you will know that there is a trade-off between ease of play and interest of game. A wargame is a simulation of a complex kind of reality, which is hard to simulate and harder to control.

So, almost without exception, wargames are divided into two breeds. On the one hand there are those which are easy to play, often relying entirely on joysticks for control and so involving nothing in the way of logistics, map coordinates or numeric manipulation of resources. Decisions boil down to when to move units, where to move units and which units to move.

On the other hand there are games which seek to emulate complex board wargames by including as much as possible in the way of troop types, morale variables, differences of terrain, supply variables, leadership values, lines of communication and so on. This makes for a much better simulation of reality, but also for a game which is hard to get to grips with and can take a long time to play.

Legionnaire

Legionnaire, released by Eclipse Software (the software branch of Longman publishing) belongs to the first type. The game was first released in 1982 for the Atari when it was distributed by the boardgame company Avalon Hill. They still own the rights to the game but have decided to pull out of the computer wargame market in this country, because it is so small. Their decision may also be due to the native wargames which, whilst not differing much in quality from Avalon Hill, are usually a whole fiver cheaper. The version reviewed here was for the Commodore 64.

In *Legionnaire* you are Caesar in the Gallic wars controlling between one and 10 legions (your choice) and fighting a pair of hostile tribes, each of which is equal in strength to your own force.

There are 16 tribes to choose from, each with different attack, defence, morale and recuperation characteristics. These range from the Auscii, who are simply pilum fodder, to the Helvetii and Huns (whose pet tortoises would apparently give Caesar a run for his dinarii).

Wargame	: *Legionnaire*
Micro	: *Commodore 64*
Format	: *Cassette*
Price	: *£9.95*
Supplier	: *Eclipse Software*

The game is in real time and control is entirely through the joystick. You guide a cursor to the unit you wish to give orders to and flick the joystick to the right to give an order. Orders are stacked up for each unit, so flicking to the left can cancel previous orders.

Once you have established that you wish to give an order, further movement of the joystick causes a shadow image of the unit to move in the desired direction to show that the order has been understood. Further movement in the same direction causes the shadow to move further, indicating that a longer march has been ordered.

Orders are therefore entirely limited to movement of individual units, one at a time. As the enemy are moving all the time you are frantically trying to get the right action out of your joystick and the game turns into a series of movements and responses.

Initially you scout the terrain (mainly woods and hills) to discover the position of the enemy forces and decide on a suitable formation and tactic. As you are in the middle of setting this up, the first enemy forces arrive and you have to respond by commiting some units. You never get chance to put your masterplan into operation as you are continually panicking over which unit to move where, desperately trying to find Cicero's crack unit of verterans to plug the increasing number of gaps.

Legionnaire is more like an arcade game than a conventional wargame. It does capture some of the hecticness of battle and the typical difficulties of premature combat. But it is mainly about wrestling with a joystick rather than making tactical decisions and, despite the names and individuality attached to each unit, the game is quite abstract, bearing little resemblance to the style of warfare it is meant to emulate.

It could equally well be called Alexander, Crusader, Napoleon or Montgomery providing the graphics were altered.

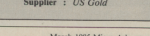
As with most such attempts to simplify the wargame it provides a playable and fun introduction but not much of a serious simulation.

I did discover one serious bug, though I do not know what caused it. In one game four legions remained on screen once the game was over and stayed there for all remaining games. They did not 'exist' because they did not affect any of the games in any way, but their graphics were not removed until I switched the C64 off so were a source of some confusion.

Combat Leader

Combat Leader is the other type of wargame. This is also for the Commodore 64 and is distributed by U.S. Gold under licence from SSI (Strategic Simulations Incorporated). SSI have a good reputation in computer wargames and *Combat Leader* shows why. It is a very creditable attempt to create a variable wargame of modern combat at platoon and company level.

Seven types of game are built in to the package and one of these allows you to build your own variant of the game. An exciting feature this because it allows you to choose just about any of the game variables. The general type of terrain can be controlled, permitting scenarios from desert to the Ardennes. Vehicle speeds, armour and weapons can be configured. The number and composition of platoons can be altered as well as the likelihood of panic and the speed of the game (*Combat Leader* is another real time game). ▶



Wargame	: *Combat Leader*
Micro	: *Commodore 64*
Format	: *Cassette*
Price	: *£14.95*
Supplier	: *US Gold*

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by Ray Davies

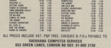
Available for the Amstrad, BBC 32K and the Commodore 64, this game starts in a deserted village, overshadowed by Dracula's sinister castle. Your mission is to enter the castle and serve His Putrescence a well prepared stake. There are many useful objects to be found along the way, and from time to time the program can be persuaded to give you hints. There are 100 locations to explore and you have the option to save your progress on tape at any time. £7.95

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◀ In addition, the fourteen page manual contains descriptions of a number of vehicles from 1939 to the present day with countries ranging from China to Israel so almost any theatre of recent warfare can be accurately simulated.

But, you cry, all these variables suggest that *Combat Leader* is more complicated than the knitting pattern for a breakfast TV pullover. Well, I cry, yes and no. If you play the full game, in which you are usually the Company Commander of up to five platoons, each with five vehicles, fighting enemy forces of a similar size, over terrain which is only displayed one third at a time, in real time, you will find it hard. But there is a perfectly enjoyable novice option which gives you command of just one platoon and serves to introduce you to the game's control system and the basic tactical decisions.

As with *Legionnaire* you move a joystick controlled cursor to establish control. Units can be given orders to move to, fire on or look towards a given target square, indicated by the cursor position. Orders can be given to individual vehicles or to platoons. (If you choose to be Company Commander in the intermediate game you cannot give commands to individual vehicles).

Orders are given by pressing two keys. The first key selects the vehicles or unit to receive the instruction and the second the instruction itself. This means there are up to sixteen keys for addressing units and eleven for orders, plus a further three to obtain special functions (R for Reporting on units seen, S for the current score and X to end the game). But in the novice game you need only remember A for platoon A, the numbers 1 to 5 for the five tanks, G for 'Go to target square', F for 'Fire' and C for 'Cease firing'.

In other words the game can be as complex as you like.

This kind of flexibility is a much better approach to wargaming than the limiting design of *Legionnaire*. *Combat Leader* allows you to design a game which is virtually identical to *Legionnaire* except that the units can fire and are tanks rather than legions. But it also allows you to design games which are much more complex AND much more realistic.

Wargame diehards will still say that the game is not complex enough. This is a fair enough complaint from anyone used to mammoth board wargames but *Combat Leader* is about as detailed as you can get on an eight bit machine. Now that sixteen bit machines are beginning to appear (or at least, the specifications are appearing) with the QL and Atari's promised machines, true board game complexity may soon appear on home micros. When it does it will have to be like *Combat Leader* to succeed.

Panzer Attack

Now to a home grown product, M C Lothlorien's *Panzer Attack* for the Spectrum. This is another game that you could just about reproduce using the *Combat Leader* system, if you stretch your imagination slightly. Its main difference is that it represents the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes in 1944, a slight increase of scale over that of *Combat Leader*. As the Allies your task is to prevent the Germans from overrunning Antwerp. As you can define the German victory conditions there are degrees of difficulty to the game in a manner roughtly equivalent to *Legionnaire*. But there is little else you can do to alter the scenario and, though it is a hard game to win, it nevertheless palls rather rapidly.

The map is only Spectrum screen size for a start. In these days of scrolling screens and multi-screen arcade adventures you would expect the design philosophy to have been adopted for the kind of game which has always cried out for large and variable display, the wargame.

As the Allied units and the German units always start from roughly the same positions (the Germans do vary their starting strategy somewhat) and the objectives of fuel dumps and Antwerp also remain in the same place, the battle generally develops along the lines of its historical prototype with the Germans trying to race through the centre and the Allies flinging in division after division. Both armies are prone to run out of fuel, but the Allies cannot use their own fuel dumps!

Wargame: *Panzer Attack*
Micro : *Spectrum 48K*
Format : *Cassette*
Price : *£5.95*
Supplier : *MC Lothlorien, 56A Park Lane, Poynton, Cheshire SK12 1AE*

This is a laudable game from Lothlorien, especially considering some of their earlier efforts, but it falls into the trap well known to boardgame and tabletop wargamers of sticking too rigidly to the historical scenario. Whilst it is certainly true that the point of a wargame is accurately to represent a particular historical conflict it is also true that a game which is always the same as that conflict will be pretty boring. Wargaming is much more interesting when



it covers the 'what if?'s of history — what if it had not rained the night before Waterloo, what if Washington had not crossed the Delaware, what if Richard III had not fallen off his horse and so on.

Control in *Panzer Attack* is similar to *Combat Leader*. Press a number for the army to receive orders. Press another key to give the order. As with all real time games, player panic results from inefficiency in the control system. So *Panzer Leader's* slowness in responding to orders is extremely frustrating. The Spectrum 48K has a notoriously poor keyboard (or at least for those of us saddled with last year's technology) but Lothlorien seem to poll the keyboard very infrequently so you sometimes have to press a key four or five times before getting a response.

The copy I had to review was an early version, and Lothlorien has apparently tightened up the game. Even with the faults, it is quite a good little game. I enjoyed playing it despite the problems, but then I didn't have to pay for it. If you are desperate for an Ardennes simulation and you only want the standard historical scenario you can probably put up with the disappointing control system.

Lothlorien, and other British companies, really should be working along the lines of *Combat Leader* for the Spectrum. It is about time our home grown machines had wargames software to match them. Software houses complain that the market is too small to justify the Research and Development, but (as the *Lords of Midnight* series shows) good R and D can create its own market and a wargame of the standard of *Combat Leader* for the Spectrum will sell well. □

THIS is the first in a regular series of articles on computer wargames. If you are interested in this field, write to Front Lines, Micro Adventurer, 12/13 Little Newport Street, London WC2H 7PP.

Adventure generators

Tony Bridge reviews The Quill Version C, Adventure Writer, and The Illustrator

THE MOST IMPORTANT program for us adventurers in 1984, was in my opinion, *The Quill* from Gilsoft.

To be brief (for those of you who have been locked in The Goblin's Dungeon for too long), *The Quill* is an adventure-writing utility, released first for the Spectrum and later for the Commodore 64, enabling the user to write fully machine-coded adventures. The program thus created does not need *The Quill* at run-time.

A veritable cottage-industry has grown up which churns out *Quill*'d adventures, and many are awful. Some, however, are rather good, and one or two achieve greatness. Until now, only Spectrum and Commodore owners have been able to savour the delights of *The Quill*, while owners of other micros have only been able to read articles and reviews of the many *Quill*'d adventures flooding the market.

This is no longer the case, as readers of last months' News Desk will know. An American company, CodeWriter, has produced disc based versions of *The Quill* for the Atari, Apple and Commodore 64 under the American title *Adventure Writer*.

The new versions are supplied on disc, although the originals were on cassette (Gilsoft supplied Commodore owners with an optional disc version). The box that

Figure 1.

AdventureWriter Main Menu

A . . . Vocabulary text
B . . . Message text
C . . . Location descriptions
D . . . Movement table
E . . . Object descriptions
F . . . Object starting locations
G . . . Vocabulary action table
H . . . Status table
I . . . Save a data base
J . . . Verify a data base
K . . . Load a data base
L . . . Test this adventure
M . . . Save this adventure
N . . . Verify this adventure
O . . . Memory available
P . . . # of portable objects
Q . . . AdventureWriter messages
+ . . . Return to Basic

Select an Option and Press **RETURN**

Adventure Writer comes in is a huge affair, containing the disc and a 120-page manual.

The only area in which the original *Quill* fell short was in its manual, which was rather difficult to get to grips with for the novice. Codewriter have completely rewritten it, with the aid of a trusty Macintosh, and come up with a very readable introduction to its program. There is even a welcome index, although this is not as complete as it could be (for example, **Inventory** is not mentioned, but it is certainly in the manual).

After booting up, a pretty title page of a fire-breathing Dragon precedes the initial Menu. This asks the user if he wants to carry on with *Adventurewriter*, or Load in the adventure included on the disc, *Rescue*. This is a pretty simple game, and won't win many prizes (you can only carry one object at a time, which is a bit limiting), but it's an excellent example of what can be achieved by using *The Adventurewriter*.

But it's the other option of this menu that we're concerned with. Going into *The Adventurewriter* from the preamble Menu leads us to the Main Menu, which includes 17 options. (See Figure 1.)

The basic building block from which an *Adventure Writer* database is created is the location. After carefully planning your adventure, the first option is selected — C on the Main Menu. This choice leads, as do many of the others, to a sub-menu, see Figure 2. Pressing '**I**' now presents a blank screen. Type the description of the first location, and this is placed in Location 0. The next description you type in will become Location 1 and so on. Should you wish to edit the description, this may be achieved by selecting '**A loc#**'.

But, now that the locations have all been placed in the database, how does the player get from one to the other? Setting the movements is done by selecting '**Movement Table**' from the Main Menu, which brings us to another sub-menu, with the same format as that for Location Descriptions. From here we can first of all **Print to Screen** a list of movement entries so far recorded. To start with, of course, all locations have null entries, set up as we were typing in the locations. Going back to the Movement Menu, we can ask to '**Alter an Entry**', and then type in, *for each and every location*, the movements possible from that location, with the number of the target location in each direction.

So we now have, in our adventure, several locations and the necessary means to get from one to another. To place objects in the various locations, we can select **E** and **F** from the Main Menu, the options which set up the object descriptions and their starting places in the adventure.

After all this, we have a good framework upon which to build a detailed adventure. To make the whole thing more interesting, for example, synonyms of words may be declared. Thus **N**, **No**, **Nor** and **Nort** may all be recognised as **North** if so desired. Now we may also add certain status 'flags', so that, for example, the player will need the Golden Key before he can open the Secret Door. As additions and deletions are made, so location descriptions and object descriptions can be modified.

There are, of course, many other facilities available to the budding adventure writer (such as a comprehensive SOUND effect creator), and the resulting game may be as simple or as complex as the writer's imagination will allow. Codewriter's version of *The Quill* is similar in most respects to the existing program, although the demonstration six-location adventure included with the disc (apart from the larger *Rescue*) is slightly different. In the 18 months or so since *The Quill*'s release, we have seen some excellent work done with the aid of this superb utility. I hope that with this new version for the American machines, many more micro owners will give their imagination free reign.

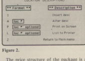


Figure 2.

The price structure of the package is a little strange. One would expect US software to be a little higher in price than the UK equivalent, and that is so in this case. But Gilsoft are still marketing the CBM disk at £20, less the mandatory 5p (do people really still fall for that old gag?), while the Codewriter version is £25 — oh, all right, £24.95. The manual with the new version is very much more "friendly" than the original, so if you feel that this ease of use is worth £5 to you, the choice is clear.

Back now to what Gilsoft have been up to.

First off, an updated version of *The Quill* has just been released. One of the few failings of the utility was that adventures written with its aid all tended to look the same.

Apart from the screen layout, which anyway with a bit of imagination and judicious character re-definition could be made to look different from the next Quil'd program, the system messages were unalterable. Thus, writers were stuck with phrases like '**I don't understand that. Try**

Figure 3.

again using different words', 'You are carrying : nothing at all' as well as the dead giveaway '**Do you really want to quit now? OK. Bye have a nice day**'. Now Gilsoft offer the C Series Quill, with a couple of new options from the Main Menu.

Program	: *Adventurewriter*
Micros	: *Atari, Apple, CBM 64*
Format	: *Disc*
Price	: *£24.95*
Supplier	: *CodeWriter, CodeWriter House, PO Box 33, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 0UG*

One of these allows the user to alter the system messages to his taste. The other option (The Object Word Table) associates objects with words like **GET**, and **WEAR**, thus saving on memory. Several new actions have also been provided, some to take advantage of the Object Word Table, while others provide the long-missing **DROP ALL** (will Version D provide the equally long-awaited **GET ALL?**) and a facility which allows for remote positioning of objects. All this and more (plus a manual and a program to convert old Series A database to the new Series C) is available to *Quill* owners for just £2.99, together with the cassette inlay from your version.

While I'm not adamantly set against graphic adventures — there are very many good ones — I do feel that good text is far, far better at evoking an atmosphere than the best picture. An exception to the saying 'A picture paints a thousand words'. However, it is an unfortunate fact that market forces dictate that text-only adventures will soon be struggling for existence. How much these 'market forces' owe their supposed strength to the strange ideas that the multiple chain-store buyers hold about games software consumers, I don't know. What I *do* know is that the overwhelming majority of letters I receive bemoan the inclusion of pointless 'pretty pictures' in adventures. I also get the same complaint from just about every software company, none of whom find the graphics make up in any way for the drastic loss of memory which could be put to better use. Ask any of them why they put graphics in their adventures, and the answer is always 'the shops won't take them otherwise'. Let's have *your* opinion on the subject!

Until now, it has not been possible to include high-resolution graphics in *Quill*'d adventures. But Gilsoft's newest utility, *The Illustrator*, will change all this. Used in conjunction with *The Quill* the program produces detailed high-resolution graphics for use in your own adventures.

The manual follows the usual Gilsoft format of lengthy description of each item on the Menu, followed by a summary of each section, and then a detailed look at the inner workings of the various parts of the program.

After LOADing, the familiar white-on-blue *Quill* Menu appears — this offers many of the options available from *The Quill's* Main Menu, such as 'Bytes Free'. Now, of course, most of the options are graphics-orientated. Gilsoft have included a demonstration database, being illustrations for the six-location adventure which will be well-known to *Quill*-owners from the original manual. One location, the Hall, has been left blank for the tyro Leonardo to practise on.

Any micro-owner sufficiently interested in graphics to have used one of the packages like Melbourne House's *Draw* will be on familiar ground here, as *The Illustrator* is in most repects similar. Using the keys grouped around the letter 's' on the keyboard, a cursor (quaintly named the Rubber Cursor) may be moved around the screen, one pixel at a time for detail work, or very much faster, using **CAPS SHIFT**. Meanwhile, a cursor (the Base Cursor) remains at the original position. The second cursor's co-ordinates are continually displayed at screen-bottom, along with current status of colours and attributes.

Many options are available — to draw a line between the Base Cursor and the Rubber Cursor, or a rectangle, or **FILL** a required figure. Detailed work can be carried out with the use of an overlaid grid of squares, which may be toggled on and off at will while drawing.

Two unusual facilities are also available. The first is the **SHADE** command. The user requests a value of between 0 and 255, upon which the selected area is 'shaded' with a pattern. The second, more important, facility is the **SUBROUTINE**. Using this the artist may include in his location illustration a standard picture from a library. This library is built up by the user, and contains shapes or pictures to be used at more than one location, or several times in one location, thus bypassing the need to draw each one repeatedly. One example in the included demonstration file is the post of the four-poster bed. By positioning the cursor, and typing **GOSUB X** (where X is the number of the Subroutine), the picture is instantly drawn.

Program	: *The Quill Series C Upgrade*
Micros	: *Spectrum 48K*
Format	: *Cassette*
Price	: *£2.99 plus original cassette inlay*
Supplier	: *Gilsoft*

The drawing commands for each illustration is held in a string (charmingly called, by Gilsoft, a 'drawstring'), which leads us to the very useful editing facility. Typing **START** returns a pointer to just before the point in the 'drawstring' where the information on the current illustration is kept. Now, typing **N** (for **NEXT**) moves this pointer along in the string to the first drawing action made. Now the user may delete this or alter it at will, or move along to the next command executed, or, indeed, back to the previous one.

Program	: *The Illustrator*
Micros	: *Spectrum 48K, CBM 64, Amstrad*
Format	: *Cassette*
Price	: *£14.95*
Supplier	: *Gilsoft*

The illustrations created with *The Illustrator* may be as simple or as complex as the imagination will allow, but of course there is a cost to pay in terms of memory. Some 35K is available for the adventure writer, and this will allow between 10 and 15 fairly simple pictures to be included without the need for curtailing text (a simple picture may take about 150 bytes) — but very detailed, freehand work gobbles up the memory, so a balance will have to be sought.



Figure 4.

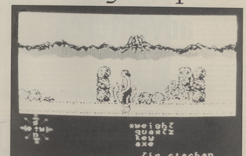
In play, the pictures are drawn fairly quickly, though not instantaneously, and fill the whole screen. Annoyingly, they then sit there until the player presses a key, whereupon the picture scrolls up to reveal the time-honoured Quill description. When the location is revisited, the picture is not re-drawn unless **R** (Redescribe) is pressed.

The Quill has shown us how such utilities may be used — either as a basic writing aid or as a springboard for the imagination. No doubt we will see many programs using *The Illustrator* to no great advantage — but one or two authors will surely see the opportunities of the package (think of illustrations being constructively used as a 'dynamic' Inventory or Map). □

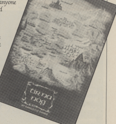


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The Giant in Fantasy

Tir Na Nog Competition



Five parchment maps of the land of youth must be won in this special competition



The mournful creature hiding behind the bush beside the right hand standing stone in our screen shot above is called a Peeker. Peekers are a mysterious race who have inhabited Tir Clachan for as long as anyone can remember. Although some authorities claim they are a debased offshoot of the magical Sidhe, others disagree. They are usually harmless, although coming too close to one can be fatal in certain circumstances.

In no more than 100 words, give us your version of the origins of the Peekers, perhaps with an explanation of their peculiar habit of popping out of the bushes every so often.

The best five entries, in the opinion of Gargoyle Games, will receive a copy of the Tir Na Nog map printed on real parchment. These are very special prizes — only 15 prints have been produced, all signed and numbered by the artist, and Gargoyle are donating one third of them for this competition.

The deadline is May 1. Entries should be sent to Gargoyle Competition, Micro Adventurer, 12/13 Little Newport Street, London WC2H 7PP — and don't forget to include your name and address.

Arcade adventures

Chris Jenkins looks at some of the more adventurous examples of the marriage of Arcade and Adventure

THE SOFTWARE of the future combines the best aspects of adventure games — strategy, the requirement for mental agility and complexity of plot — with the best of arcade games — brilliant graphics, sophisticated programming techniques and exciting action.

These arcade adventures, or Aardvarks as I insist on calling them to the disgust of my colleagues, are in my opinion a gênre which will come to dominate the market, as pure adventurers become bored with repetitive text-only programs, and arcade players come to demand something more sophisticated than mindless shoot-'em-ups.

So how do you go about conquering the world of Aardvarks? First, go out and buy a joystick. I know, the very thought will fill some of you with disgust, but grit your teeth and get a bog-standard stick (no need for optional laser sighting attachment and self-locking neutrino ranging circuits) plus the interface necessary for your Spectrum, BBC or whatever.

Next, check out the market carefully. Not everything described as an "arcade adventure" turns out to fulfil the requirements I've outlined. *Manic Miner*, for instance, could be described as an arcade adventure, but in fact requires no more than infinite patience and precise reactions to play. The best games require more strategic thought, and reading the blurb on the pack should give you some idea of the content. For some reason true Aardvarks usually seem to come in mega-packages with 150-page full-colour leaflets, badges, a club magazine, a scarf, three posters and a plastic goldfish. I exaggerate of course.

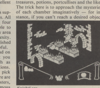
For Spectrum owners, an excellent starter is *SabreWulf* from Ultimate.

Like many adventures, *SabreWulf* is supplied with the minimum of instructions. All you know is that you must collect four amulets and combine them to be able to pass through a mystic portal. The play area is a jungle maze of enormous complexity. Several games magazines have published *SabreWulf* maps, which are very helpful.

As in an adventure game, you'll find on your journey through the maze that you pass potentially useful objects such as treasure, food, weapons and potions. Your character will automatically pick these up on passing over them, but there are also dangers such as various monsters, poisonous orchids and the eponymous Wulf, which you must avoid.

For a game requiring more in the way of pure strategy, you should look at *KnightLore*, again from Ultimate for the Spectrum. This one features an intrepid explorer afflicted by lycanthropy. You have forty days and nights to find the secret of the Wizard's magic potion before you become a werewulf forever . . .

The transformation scenes, in which you involuntarily change shape, are brilliantly handled, as are the animated monsters and obstacles. Each of the 128 3-D screens is packed with details; moving stone blocks, treasures, potions, portcullises and the like. The trick here is to approach the mysteries of each chamber imaginatively — for instance, if you can't reach a desired object by jumping, can you stand on one of the other objects to reach it, or move it to a new position? Split second timing is vital, as is attention to the clock. Should you transform into a werewulf in the middle of a difficult routine you'll meet a sticky end, either from guardian mongsters or from automatic traps.


KnightLore

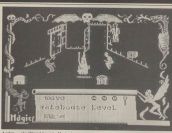
At the risk of making it sound as if only Ultimate produces good Aardvarks for the Spectrum, another goodie is *Underwurlde*. This has nearly 600 screens on a grid 52 deep by 16 wide, representing a selection of furnished rooms and mysterious caverns.

To win you must find four randomly-placed weapons and destroy the guardians of *Underwurlde*. You can run and jump around the caverns and ledges, but must beware of various monsters and natural hazards. Blue gems will make you invulnerable for a limited time. *Underwurlde* doesn't feature as many strategic elements as *Knight Lore*, and is perhaps more of a joystick basher.

For a little variation, let's look at the CBM64. Virgin's *Sorcerer* is a fast-moving Aardvark which features a flying wizard, who has to collect various magic objects in order to reach a confrontation with the evil Necromancer without falling victim to ghosts and goblins. The game looked very impressive when it appeared, but the

Sorcerer — the Magus attacked by the Evil Eye





Avalon — the Wizard beset by Undead

Commodore version pales into insignificance besides the magnificent Amstrad CPC 464 version. This implementation of *Sorcerer* features stunningly sharp, colourful graphics, and a truly infuriating and fascinating plot.

Six good wizards are trapped in the game's forty screens. Your wizard must fly around the castles and dungeons of the magic land, picking up useful objects by passing over them, and fighting off the baddies to liberate the six captives. Only then can you progress to the show-down.

The objects scattered around the screens each have a specific task. Swords and clubs are for killing land-based enemies. Shooting stars and spells kill the airborne Demons, and Sorcerer's Moons, Scrolls and Bottles open various doors. Any contact with the enemy depletes your energy, though you can refuel by landing on a cauldron. But beware! If you try to refuel while carrying certain objects, you will lose energy.

The game starts randomly from one of five locations, and it's essential to make a map and keep notes of which objects open which doors. Altogether this is certainly the best game yet for the Amstrad, and possibly the greatest arcade adventure I've seen.

In many ways it's similar to Hewson's *Avalon* for the Spectrum, which again features a flying mage. This time you are armed with a selection of spells, selected using the joystick controls, which allow you to move around the 200-room Kingdom of *Avalon* in your quest to destroy the Lord of Chaos. Some doors are locked until you find a key, some are invisible until you cast the right spell. Sprites can be enslaved using a SERVANT spell, and made to work for you. Avalon is so complex that like many adventures it has a SAVE facility. It's one of the most Aardvark-like of Aardvarks, combining adventure and arcade features remarkably well.

For the BBC, you could do worse than investigate MicroPower's *Castle Quest*. The scenario is similar to that of many an adventure — finding the wizard's treasure which is hidden somewhere inside the castle. To do this you must determine the correct use of the many objects found on the platforms and corridors of the castle.

To give you some idea of the adventure-like nature of the problems you're set, if you are captured by the guards at one stage you are thrown into jail. To escape you must pick up a stool, leap into the air and throw the stool at a torch, pick up the stool and place it near the door, pick up the torch and use it to set fire to the bed, leap onto the stool then onto a ledge over the door, wait for the guard to rush in and leap down behind him, then through the door! It makes getting out of the goblin's dungeon look like a piece of cake.

Back to the CBM 64 for *Impossible Mission*, a disc game from CBS. Again this takes a good deal of co-ordination as you control the brilliantly-animated figure of a secret agent, leaping from level to level in a complex of underground rooms. The object is to examine the items of furniture and computer equipment in the complex in order to discover hidden computer codes. These let you log onto security terminals so that you can disable the lethal guard robots or reset the elevators in each screen. The password for the final control room is in several pieces, which have to be assembled correctly to gain access. You have a pocket computer to help you, and can also call up your HQ computer at the cost of a time penalty.

Impossible Mission features blood-curdling software-generated speech and excellent sound effects. It's perhaps more of a logic puzzle than a strategy game, but should interest many adventure fans with a quick trigger finger.

Finally it's worth looking at some more Spectrum games, since the Spectrum is still the first machine many Aardvarks are designed for.

Microgen's Wally series veers towards the arcade rather than the adventure side, but is good nonetheless. *Automania, Pyjamarama* and the forthcoming *Life of Wally* are described as "graphical adventures", in which the usual arcade jumping-and-ducking idea takes on a new depth. *Automania* is almost entirely an arcade game, *Pyjamarama* has more of a quest element in the saga of the sleeping Wally searching his house for an alarm clock to wake him from his nightmare, and *Life of Wally* reputedly features several characters any of which can be controlled at any time — like a more conventional adventure such as *Lords of Midnight*.

Ocean's *Gift From The Gods* also features a combination of animated graphics and a quest element, following the ordeal of Orestes in the labyrinth of Mycenae. Hidden in the chambers are sixteen geometric shapes which, when placed in the right order in the Guardian's chamber, reveal the exit. Various creatures sap your strength, which can be replenished with streams of water. Orestes' sister Electra will help him to choose the correct objects if she's around, but the evil Clytaemnestra will confuse the issue.

Gargoyle's *Tir Na Nog* winds up this brief look at the wonderful world of Aardvarks. Described as a "computer movie", it features convincing animation set in a world of Celtic myth. The design of the scrolling backgrounds is very rich and detailed. The hero Cuchulainn must traverse a series of interlinked paths. As is traditional, the quest involves finding and assembling the parts of a broken artefact, in this case a seal, while fighting off the baddies which include the ape-like Sidhe. There are some 150 objects which can be picked up and used.

Tir Na Nog



This concludes our brief look at the private life of the Aardvark. Die-hard adventurers will I'm sure curl their lips with contempt at the idea of it all, but try to be a little flexible. The most sophisticated programs now being produced fall into this category, and you'll soon be finding that skill with a joystick has become as indispensible to the adventure games player as a working knowledge of Elvish. □

ADVENTURE HELP

If you need advice or have some to offer write to Tony Bridge and Ken Matthews, Adventure Help, Micro Adventurer, 12-13 Little Newport St, London WC2H 7PP

QUITE A VOLUMINOUS and mixed mailbag this month so Big Tony and I have enlisted the help of the Questing Elf and asked Balsak to add his considerable weight to clear the pile of post. If you wish to avoid waiting for a plea to be answered via Adventure Contact or in this column just enclose a SSAE with your question.

Also, I'm sure that you all realise that neither of us see, let alone play every adventure released and we hope you will continue to send us your thoughts, maps and tips on those we don't mention — so keep them coming and help us help other Adventurers. This month's column is based on hints sent in by various readers and contributors to Adventurline.

First on *Wheel of Fortune* for the BBC, Mr H Craig of Leicester tells us "Scare the birds with the music box before entering the shop and ringing the bell. Then tell the farmer that the bull is in the china shop and lead him there to get your penny."

A map of *Valhalla* from Andy MacGregor of Basingstoke enables us to tell those still searching for Skornir; start in El Vinos, then without helmet, SE twice then north (with Ofnir). This takes you to Midgard from where you can JUMP to a cave in Hell. Holding Drapnir but not Ofnir allows you to go east twice. If you have the shield you can go east again to the location where Skornir is concealed.

Chris Webb of Barham near Canterbury and Neil Cameron of Penrith in Cumbria have both sent tips for *Sherlock*. To continue past Monday night you must prove to Lestrade that Ffoulkes is innocent of the murder. On Monday evening you should go to Slater Street in London and, wearing the Chinaman's disguise, go north into an opium den. Wait there until 11.52pm when Percy will enter. Removing the disguise will result in him confessing his addiction. If you go out and wait until midnight Lestrade will arrive and you can clear Ffoulkes and continue into Tuesday. It is not clear to me why you should suspect Ffoulkes of being an opium addict in the first place, so if I've missed something let me know.

If anyone has found the Old Mill Road, near Leatherhead, both Chris and I would be pleased to hear from you.

Melbourne House's other release, *Hampstead,* has had a lot of people guessing and the unusual theme of this *Quilled* adventure certainly appealed to me. Robert Abbott of Epsom and Marion Taylor of the Barbican in London have supplied hints.

You need to sit on the bench on Hampstead Heath to find the credit card. You will also need the lathe bracket to give to the man on the train.

Level 9's *Return to Eden* is still causing trouble to successful *Snowballers.* To survive the blast from the engines wear the radsuit and make your way to the underground cave with the soft leaves. Here you must wait NOT sleep. To survive in the forest just drop the radsuit and don't move when you hear the droning noise.

Ian McKie from Bridlington has reached the city and tells me you need the seed, spade, stone fruit and anything else you can carry to enter through the underground river.

Our December appeal for help on *Podzelski* has borne fruit with a reply from Dave Thorpe of Camberley. To escape from the cellar you must use a wine bottle from the shelf to smash the door down(?). If you are in the bedroom, don't close the window no matter how draughty it gets. In the hall try swinging on the chandelier and don't leave the phone in the cell ringing too long. After all that help, if any of you know how to stop the deaf man's hearing aid exploding when you give him the battery, let us know!

Some early tips for those playing Infocom games.

Madeleine English of Dunloaghaire in Eire has completed the fiendishly difficult *Starcross.* To deal with the green airlock, touch the skeleton to get the violet rod then drop the disk and stand on it. You should have completed the tasks in the Lab first or you'll never get the red rod.

Jason Dean from Wales has mastered the ins and outs of *Suspended's* cryogenic nightmare and reports; when the men come to pull the plug on you, have Auda report their conversation and then wait until they settle down to sleep. Get Auda to grab their bag and run for the short corridor. Wait there until the men catch up, discover the acid leak nearby and turn it off for you.

Since last month's mention of Adventureline help on Infocom games there has been a lot of interest but I'm very disappointed in the large number phoning for help in *Sorcerer* who can't get out of the Guild building. When I mention the infotator given with the game there is usually an embarrassed silence or a lame excuse about having hired the game etc — a pirated copy of the game is unplayable without the infotator, as are *Starcross* and *Infidel* without their maps.

Lecture over, and on to *Token of Ghall* with comments from Dave Jones of Shaftesbury, Dorset and James Piper of Farleigh Wallop, Hants who agree that you should play the flute to pass the python and make sure to examine the crown you will find.

From Hugh Walker and Karen Tyers, both from Surrey, some information on the awful *Eureka.* In prehistoric times you need to say Kong Ka to the man with the spear to be led to the village. Here you must trade for the bamboo ladder and the clay pot you need to survive the desert.

In Roman times your first task should be to get the key from the dark, narrow alley before allowing yourself to be captured as a galley slave. Use key to escape from your chains then wait until the boat is sunk — don't try to move it. When you are adrift save the man and you will both be rescued. You should have managed to learn Latin by now as well!

If you know how to get above 50% in Adventure five let us know.

In *Erik the Viking,* just get the eagle to use the spittoon — it's one of the magic ingredients (Ugg!).

In *Kentilla,* you need to dip the key from Tylon's bedroom in the liquid to turn it to iron to turn the lock.

In *Munroe Manor* use the hammer to smash the cases in the basement to get the wood to repair the stair to the gallery.

This column is designed to put adventurers in touch with one another. When you're stumped a fellow adventurer may be able to help — and you may be able to solve other people's problems. If you are having difficulties with an adventure, fill in this coupon and send it to Adventure Contact, Micro Adventurer, 12/13 Little Newport St, London WC2H 7PP.

Micro ....

Adventure ....

Problem ....

....

....

Name ....

Address ....

....

ADVENTURE CONTACT

MICRO Spectrum **Adventure** System 15000 **Problem** What message do you leave on the board to get into Selcra's files? **Name** Steve Friel **Adress** 62 Coolgardie Avenue, Highams Park, London E4 9HP

MICRO Electron **Adventure** Sphinx Adventure **Problem** I can't make any general progress **Name** David Bown **Address** 16 Park Road, Bear Wood, Warley, West Midlands

MICRO CBM64 **Adventure** Dungeon Adventure **Problem** How do you get the horn from the goat? What is the packing case for? **Name** Andrew Monahan **Address** 1 Knightscroft House, 80 Sea Lane, Rustington, West Sussex BN16 2RY

MICRO CBM64 **Adventure** Return to Eden **Problem** I cannot cross the river or pass the leviathan **Name** Richard Howlett **Address** 9 Avondale Road, South Benfleet, Essex

MICRO Spectrum 48K **Adventure** Jewels of Babylon **Problem** Where is the key to unlock the trapdoor situated in the warren of passages in the cavern? **Name** Mrs G Officer **Address** 1 Gleneagles Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS27 3PU

MICRO Atara **Adventure** The Mask of the Sun **Problem** Where do I find the bowls of silver, jade, and gold? **Name** Parvin Bansal **Address** 35 Parklands Way, Hartlepool, Cleveland

MICRO BBC B **Adventure** Gateway to the Skies **Problem** How do I get past the orc and where are the bones for the dog? **Name** Sue Scott **Address** 2 Aberfoyle Road, Streatham Vale, London SW16 5AA

MICRO Spectrum **Adventure** The Island **Problem** How do I get through the quicksand and survive? **Name** Paul Hammock **Address** 10 Stonechat Close, Ferndown, Dorset BH22 9QH

MICRO Spectrum 48K **Adventure** The Eye of Bain **Problem** Where do I find the Key to unlock the door in the ruined tower? **Name** Mrs G Officer **Address** 1 Gleneagles Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS27 3PU

MICRO Amstrad CPC464 **Adventure** Forest at Worlds End **Problem** How do you cross the river on the eastern edge of the chasm **Name** Andrew Hart **Address** 23 Manor Road, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire

MICRO Spectrum 48K **Adventure** Diamond **Problem** How do I get the orchestra to play? How do I get through the trapdoor? **Name** Karen Pemberton **Address** Forbes 39, David Russell Hall, St Andrews

MICRO Amstrad CPC464 **Adventure** Fantasia Diamond **Problem** How do I get across the river to the fortress? What does the picture mean? **Name** C Richards **Address** ARSB, EES, RAF Brize Norton, Oxon

MICRO BBC B **Adventure** Twin Kingdom Valley **Problem** How do I get the bronze key off the witch and then how do I get out of the maze? **Name** Antony Liddell **Address** 84 Albany Road, Ansdell, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire

MICRO Amstrad CPC464 **Adventure** Message From Andromeda **Problem** How do I cross the crystal bridge? **Name** Colin Batchelor **Address** 109 Pirks Hill, Swanley, Kent

MICRO CBM64 **Adventure** Mystery of Munroe Manor **Problem** How do I open the stuck wardrobe door in the master bedroom **Name** Alan Frances **Address** Meadow View, St Leonards Avenue, Blandford, Dorset DT11 7NY

MICRO CBM64 **Adventure** Snowball **Problem** How to get Bat-Pak from video viewer **Name** Lee Woodford **Address** 16 Wellspring Terrace, Pontyminster, Gwent, Wales

MICRO CBM64 **Adventure** Empire of Karn **Problem** How to open chest, how to mend hole in ship **Name** Vincent Trimbrell **Address** 101 Carisbrooke Crescent, Poole, Dorset BH15 4LB.

Outward bound in Karn country

***Barbara Conway** goes on an adventure holiday in Interceptor Micro's Heroes of Karn and Empire of Karn*

IN HAPPIER times the setting of *Heroes of Karn* may have been a Paradise for tourists, but it just so happens that when the game opens, being a mysterious Stranger drawn to that land is the start of rather more than a usual activity holiday. The problem is that all four of Karn's principal citizens have vanished and a Mug (er,



Hero) is needed to lead the quest to restore them to their rightful places in society.

Heroes is a graphic adventure, with plenty of locations all illustrated with an admirably executed once-only picture. But the puzzles are the thing and, although some of them are quite obvious (I found King Beren almost immediately by following one of the most basic fairytale tenets in the book, although the averagely macho adventurer may balk at this point) many are real brainteasers.

The territory takes a lot of careful exploring and Beren will prove an invaluable companion. In fact he's remarkably obedient for a King, but perhaps that's just because he's grateful for the rescue. Together you're looking for Istar the Wise, Haldir the Elf-minstrel and the dwarf Khadim. And I soon discovered that I wasn't going to get very far without the soothsaying aid of Anton the Gypsy King. He's very near the start of the game but since he's not a philanthropist and demands that his palm be crossed (twice) with silver, it'll take a bit of time to get him what he wants and gain the much-needed advice.

Most of the nasties are either supernatural or zoological (one apparent nasty turns out to be one of the objects of your quest who has been horribly transformed) and even where it's possible killing is not always the answer. With a wide variety of instruments available, each of which has a specific property, at least one savage breast can be soothed long enough to set another hero free. Just be careful with the flute!

This is not, however, to suggest that *Heroes* is a pacifist adventure. There's plenty of opportunity for strewing the place with blood and guts and in one case I had, after learning the hard way, to ensure that a vicious enemy never had a chance to be born.

Finishing the quest is an exhausting but enjoyable enterprise, with the added appeal that it is possible to accumulate large amounts of treasure which can, with the aid of a magic incantation usable in certain locations, be deposited right at the start of the map without inconvenience.

In fact this transportation can come in very handy throughout the game if used properly. By the time the Top People of Karn were back where they belonged, I had accumulated a tidy fortune in valuables.

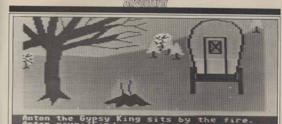
As every Adventurer knows, there's rarely such a thing as a perfect world and, despite having ventured so nobly in *Heroes*, poor old Karn is soon in dire trouble again. For King Zheff, foul fiend that he is, is sitting in his fortress and plotting the worst and the noble emperor Callastheon needs at least one new champion to aid his faithful abherent Davin. Guess who it turns out to be?

So there I was, at the start of this sequel, in the emperor's hall after having watched a sinister loading screen (I suppose that unpleasant visage must be Zheff) accompanied by some adequate music. The hall itself was nicely depicted in Hobbit-style graphics but for details I needed the text window beneath the picture. That told me that there was a sword nearby, but a "mysterious force" prevented me from taking it. Be warned, unless you prise the cassette insert out of its cover and read it with care you won't get the sword at all and, at a later stage, you need it pretty badly. Check by asking for a "list" of your possessions at the start, you may get a surprise.

After solving that problem I wandered out to find some transport to the main scene of the quest, which is a pretty murderous one as such things go. The aim is, simply, to kill Zheff and all his minions and there are 64 locations, each with its own graphic screen (which helpfully displays only on your first visit to it thus saving time and irritation) and a liberal number of objects to choose from. Virtually all of them will be needed but you can only carry eight at a time, so they have to be picked up and used in the right sequence.

From the starting point I boarded my trusty ship and, after killing myself through a piece of unheroic carelessness, tried out the "save" facility next time. This is a highly efficient function with the welcome bonus that, although the game is on cassette, it saves equally happily to disc. Frequent "saving" may be a worthwhile exercise since quite a few lethal traps are sprung with very little warning.





Early on it becomes apparent that kindness to animals, with two exceptions, is well rewarded. Getting the cat purring takes some unorthodox action, but it's worth it. Incidentally one of the minor bugs (there are a few of them) in the program is that it doesn't warn you in advance that you'll be doing some night-sailing. Take appropriate precautions!

Once on Zheff's territory I and my companions (human and otherwise) had some intricate travelling to do. One useful principle to bear in mind is that, generally speaking, if someone sounds friendly then rewarding them suitably is worthwhile. If they don't sound friendly then varying degrees of drastic remedy are called for. There's no need to get tough with the hostile widow Nahzil (I got her out of the way very effectively even so) and devious — some would even say highly unpleasant — measures can be employed against more formidable opposition.

After collecting a new companion shortly after landing I found myself at the Great Gateway of the city of Ivshem, Zheff's capital.

A quick recce round the bazaars showed that I was obviously going to need something in the way of money (I seemed to have carelessly started this quest without my wallet and the instruction "give American Express card to Apothecary" just got me "sorry I don't understand" instead of "that'll do nicely") so I tried the neighbourhood of the City.

I'd already been in one direction, where I got the new companion for what seemed (at the time) a remarkably reasonable price, so I tried the only other one on offer. This got me to a pyramid and a series of one-way rooms whose contents included some of the necessary valuables and one forceful reminder that an adventurer's best friend isn't necessarily his/her mummy. Incidentally, although this is the desert, water can still be a hazard. Make sure you have something buoyant with you.

Back in Ivshem the job was to accumulate all the necessary items for the sneak attack on the palace. It's important to remember that, when there's an object around and you can't get it for any reason other than that you're already carrying too much, somebody else will probably be able to get it for you. One of my companions was very good at carrying heavy or awkward objects and proved to have one other, rather less innocuous, use towards the end of the game. Having accumulated various essential articles (remember, if it's movable you'll probably need it at some point) and survived a murderous attack thanks to prior precautions, I had to get myself and my party into the palace grounds.

Magical assistance was required but just getting to the necessary magician required a well-known trick on the part of one of my companions whose musical abilities seem to have been gained in India. This route is also one-way so make sure that you have all eight of the unused items with you before you take advantage of it. That means you'll have to have explored Ivshem thoroughly by that point.

The magician helpfully gave me the means to complete the main part of my task (and for free!) and transport was then needed from the only available source to get into the palace grounds. Once there, livestock started to play an important part in the plot again and I discovered, fatally, that just as it was a mistake to try to take the wrong items with me (be careful — four of them are used more than once) it could also be a mistake to assume that just because somebody had helped me he was my friend. And getting rid of him wasn't as decisive as it seemed.

The final stage, eliminating the forces of evil, requires considerable ruthlessness. By the time I'd finished and made my getaway (remembering how you survived in the pyramid will help here) the castle looked rather like Elsinore after the end of *Hamlet* with everyone dead apart from what seemed to be a remarkably stupid servant in the wine-cellar.

The graphics are attractive, although decoration is all they add. Instructions are generally standard verb/noun format, but can be more complex when you want to "say" something to someone or put an object somewhere specific. Things to watch out for include the fact that, when addressing or referring to another person, the program won't recognise the instruction unless you start the name with a capital letter, and the way that, when you "drop" an item, the text description does not always specify it, even though it will still be available.

Empire of Karn is, like its predecessor, an eminently playable package which requires alertness and ingenuity on the part of the adventurer, although some of the tests could have been more interesting. An enjoyable quest, but I still feel a bit queasy about the solution. If this is how the goodies act, the baddies must have been quite something! □

Adventures:		*Heroes of Karn* *Empire of Karn*
Micro	:	*Commodore 64*
Format	:	*Cassette*
Price	:	*£7.00*
Supplier	:	*Interceptor Micros, Lindon House, The Green, Tadley, Hampshire.*

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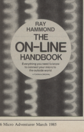
On-line

Book *The On-line Handbook* **Author** *Ray Hammond* **Publisher** *Fontana* **Price** *£4.95*

THIS BOOK is really two books worked into one. The major part is directed at the intelligent novice who wishes to access the world from their home micro for leisure purposes. A considerable amount of time is also spent, however, on more "serious" uses which may prove to be of interest to some readers, but which most will find over-expensive, irrelevant and too esoteric for them. Although it's nice to know they exist, I think the author goes over the top in giving us page after page of details on services few are ever likely to use.

This excess baggage aside, however, the rest of the book really does live up to its title — it's a handbook for going on-line. It's packed with tips, addresses, phone numbers, and the kind of factual information you would otherwise have to discover by trial-and-error, or from someone of your acquaintance who already knew it (and was willing to tell you!).

Hammond tries to describe things objectively, so readers may decide for themselves about which products they'll need to try. This works quite well when comparing, say, Prestel with CompuNet, because good arguments both for and against are presented; in the more general discussions, though, such as the overview of modems, more comprehensive reviews of equipment, with advice as to which are the best buys, would have been appreciated. His list of suppliers is still quite handy, I suppose.



The book is very readable, and I particularly liked the short asides ("log-on messages") which are scattered throughout the text, containing interesting, although not essential, snippets of info. The long "examples", however, which are logs of various services in use, left me cold. It's fairly obvious that they're just verbatim print-outs of sessions, which have not been sufficiently edited. Repeating entire records on the "greenhouse effect" just to show the detail contained in a database is, frankly, a waste of time.

All in all, the book is very competently written, certainly of help to the novice, and well worth having — even if it *doesn't* mention *Mud*! The "serious" modem-user, although well-catered for, is unlikely to read it (anyone who can afford up to £140 a month to register with a single database probably employs someone who knows all about comms anyway!).

I certainly recommend this book, although perhaps you'd better rush out and buy it fairly quickly before the detailed information it contains is obsolete; already the sterling-dollar exchange rates mentioned are (unfortunately) way out of step with reality!

Richard Bartle

BBC solutions

Book *The BBC Micro Adventurer* **Micro** *BBC & Electron* **Price** *£3.95* **Author** *Bob Chappell* **Publisher** *Duckworth, The Old Piano Factory, 43 Gloucester Crescent, London NW1*

WHOSE plight can be more pitiful than that of the poor adventurer who has paid out good money for an adventure, only to find that he or she is unable to get past the very first obstacle! It's nearly as bad as being given a Rolls-Royce only to find you can't get the door open!

So begins the introduction to this book of adventure solutions. The book contains 100 per cent solutions, plus maps, of *Philosopher's Quest* and *Castle of Riddles* by Acornsoft, plus two Scott Adam's adventures, *Voodoo Castle* and *The Count*.

To minimise the risk of spoiling the adventures, the solutions are grouped under an index of topics at the beginning of each chapter. Using the index, you may then turn to the appropriate solution number and read only what you wish to know. The style of the book is light hearted and amusing. For this reason, adventurers who have already solved these particular games could well find it interesting reading.

It is possible, in some games, to achieve the final solution and still have missed some points of interest. For example, do the floating stars in *Philosopher's Quest* have any significance? One suspicion the book did confirm, was that *Castle of Riddles* has a basic flaw in it. You cannot finish this game without having been killed at least once! Still, when you have been resurrected as often as I have been, you don't worry about little things like that.

My main worry concerning this book is that it is attempting to sell that which can be obtained for nothing. Most software houses will provide a solution sheet for their adventures, for the price of a stamped addressed envelope. The solutions may be provided on a scrappy xerox sheet, without a map. They will certainly not be as thorough or as amusing as this book, but they generally suffice. If all else fails you can write to *Micro Adventurer's* Help Line!

As I am often asked for solutions to adventures, I will find this book a useful addition to my bookshelf. However, as mentioned, it may be the most interesting set of solutions, but not the cheapest.

Andy Mitchell

Maelstrom

Book *Maelstrom* **Author** *Alexander Scott* **Publisher** *Puffin* **Price** *£1.95*

MAELSTROM resembles other FRP games in its basic mechanics but it chooses a subject which, to my knowledge, no published game deals with: Tudor and Stewart England. Scott has done what any good fantasy games master should do and moulded his adventure to his interests. The result is an adventure designed with care and love and a great deal of vivid imagination; unfortunately this book does not really offer the kind of information which will enable anybody else to play it.

Scott has fallen victim to the limitations of the format that Puffin has used. The idea was obviously to package the whole thing up so that it resembles the other books in the Adventure Gamebook series. For this reason a fairly dire solo adventure is stuffed in the centre.

Scott has not helped matters in the way he has chosen to allocate the limited space available to him. A lengthy (and fascinating) appendix on the medicinal values of various herbs but no organised weapons chart, for example. Interesting and vague accounts of sociological types which players may choose but few tables included on their abilities and those dispersed through the text.

It is obvious that the whole thing is abundantly clear to Scott and when he runs an adventure *Maelstrom* must be a real pleasure to play. He writes fluently, cleverly and logically, all hallmarks of a good games master but he doesn't offer the rigid structure necessary.

Worst of all, the book will confuse and drive away those who are totally unfamiliar with FRP games and come across *Maelstrom* in their local book store, where Puffins but not TSR books are sold.

Peter Berlin

Commodore adventures

Book *Creating Adventures on the Commodore 64* **Authors** *Clive Gifford, Robert Young* **Publisher** *Interface* **Price** *£5.25*

THIS new book, from Interface Publications, written by Clive Gifford and Robert Young is, quite simply, a comprehensive guide to programming your own Basic adventures.

The book begins with the obligatory description of adventures, which is, in this case, thankfully brief. The authors quickly get into their stride by emphasising the ideal nature of adventures as exercises for new programmers and suggesting how, after playing around with simple routines, your acquired skills can be used to build a full blown adventure without the complications of graphics and sound. The basic parts of an adventure are then listed and the importance of introducing structure to your Basic programmes is stressed.

The bulk of the book is dedicated to four complete adventure programmes that can be typed in and played. These games are broken down into routines that are explained in easy to read detail that even I could follow. By going through the games I hope you will be able to see how the techniques of adventure programming are introduced at each stage.

The first of these, *The Dark Forest*, is a form of text arcventure where both food and treasure must be gained and monster overcome. Single key input is used for movement and the only other commands are an occasional Y/N. The listing is broken down to show Initialisation, Control Loop, Combat and so on, and the routines cleverly introduce the main features of most adventures.

The second adventure, *The Neilsen Papers*, has an interesting plot based on industrial espionage, where you, the spy, must steal and escape with the Neilsen Papers. The programme introduces a quite sophisticated Command Analyser including the ever useful (?) HELP command.

The third, *The Golden Chalice* is played on a grid where you have a certain time to find the object in the title and escape with your life. The listing clearly demonstrates the use of arrays in adventure programming.

The final listing, *The City of Atlantis* is converted from the BBC and is concerned with finding your way back from the centre of Atlantis to your diving ship. The game is more of a full-blown adventure with some 27 locations.

The next chapter lists a few arcade/strategy games and is followed by a section on adding sound and graphics.

The book is nicely rounded off with some help for the adventures listed and a few suggestions for games of your own.

For creating adventures, this book might be a little redundant since the advent of the Quill and its acceptance as a medium for producing 'commercial quality' adventures.

However, for those still interested in writing their own from scratch, *Creating Adventures* is a very well laid out, comprehensive guide, and, to me, represents good value for money. I'd also like to see the games reproduced on tape so that lazy debuggers like me could have a go without the hassle of typing them in.

Ken Matthews

BBC Games

Book *Creating Adventure Programs on the BBC Micro* **Author** *Ian Watt* **Publisher** *Addison-Wesley* **Price** *£6.95*

THE TECHNIQUES used in Adventure game writing are relatively easy and it's for this reason that many aspiring game writers try this genre for their first masterpiece. A good book explaining these techniques is therefore a great help in getting started.

As with other books of this type the author has included a printout of a full game, (in this case three games) to illustrate the main routines. To ensure the book and games will be suitable for 16K and 32K Beebs the games are quite small.

To explain the working of the games the book contains two separate chapters on, the commands used and their meanings, plus the objects and their uses. Data techniques given are simple, which makes them easy to understand but very inefficient.

Adventure games are by nature large beasts and they can only be made manageable by ensuring they are founded on well structured basic routines onto which the newcomer can build his game. Luckily the Beeb's 'Procedure' structure makes this task much easier than other machines. Imagine my horror therefore to find that the techniques given are a spaghetti of GOTO instructions and not a single procedure exists within the book's covers! In addition all variable names used throughout are single letters, rather than the longer names permissable on this machine. I suspect the author developed these games, and his bad habits, on a ZX81 and has still not learned the errors of his ways.

In its defence the book explains fully practically every single line of code, and copious notes are given on the use of all the variables. It's a pity that such extensive explanations are necessary when a more careful structure could have made the task so much easier. Just in case you can't solve the games given, there are step by step instructions.

To enable you to get started on your own epic the author has provided a skeleton story-line, plus a fully numbered map which you may use as a basis.

This book will certainly help you create Adventure games — just be careful you don't infect yourself with the dreaded GOTO bug at the same time!

Andy Mitchell

Cryptic

Books *Crypt of the Vampire, Temple of Flame* **Authors** *Dave Morris, Oliver Johnson* **Publisher** *Granada* **Price** *£1.50*

AND TWO MORE veterans of the British games scene try their hands at writing money-spinning adventure books.

The formula certainly remains the same; the adventures are set in traditional dungeon type environments and the structure of the game owes a great deal to *D&D*.

While the books are stunningly unoriginal in conception they have several things going for them. Firstly the character creation and combat system have been stripped to the barest essentials. This is definitely an advantage. Combat in gamebooks where there is no responsive DM will always boil down to straight slugging (dice rolling), so why complicate them more than necessary? No one is fooled and the adventure is slowed down.

The second plus is that the encounters in the Golden Dragon books are the fairest and best thought out in any of those published so far. Confronted with a smoke demon in *Crypt* the reader is offered (amongst other options) a set of bellows; to the player who is prepared to give the situation a moment's thought the obvious and logical answer.

The books are also well written and in an unselfconscious way. This can, however, lead to stylistic pitfalls especially in *Temple*. I doubt that the average school-age reader will know what a 'sepulchral rictus' is. And I had to look up 'luteous', 'glyph' and 'newel', amongst others. Perhaps the authors think that unfamiliar words will increase the mystery and romance of the adventure.

As for the adventures, one is set in a vampire's crypt, the other in a temple in the jungle. Here it seems the author's missed a trick. As the Dragon Knight of Palados (the player) clanks up the side of the temple in full plate armous and the mid-day sun I'd have had him roll for heat exhaustion.

Peter Berlin

Skeleton staff

Adventure *Staff of Zaranol* **Micro** *Spectrum 48K* **Price** *£5.95* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *Cases Computer Simulations, 14 Langton Way, Blackheath, London SE3 7TL*

THE STAFF OF ZARANOL is a fascinating new *Quilled* adventure from CCS. At first sight it appears to have the usual boring "you are the wizard's apprentice" plot — in fact this is far from the truth.

In your master's absence you have stumbled on an old spell book and, a little too eagerly, have summoned an entity who seems more than a tiny bit miffed at being disturbed and curses you to die — within one pass of the moon. As part of the game is to discover the demon's name, I'll only mention that you couldn't have picked a nastier opponent if you'd tried!

Fortunately, you are not alone; your friend, Lan, will come whenever called to give what help he can. He even tells you the five steps you must make to banish the demon — it's performing them that's the problem! Lan doesn't seem to share your view of the seriousness of your predicament and his wry chuckles become a bit tiresome after a while — he's too useful to be dispensed with though.

The adventure is not too large, with just over forty locations — but time is short and there are plenty of puzzles to keep you absorbed. HELP works sometimes and your reference book seems essential at all times.

Spectrum 48K

THE STAFF OF ZARANOL

ADVENTURE GAMES

The game is mainly concerned with obtaining and working out the clues scattered throughout the adventure, which makes it different enough to be very enjoyable. There are plenty of objects to manipulate and a few other characters to 'interact' with. This is aided by an extensive dictionary of special and 'action' verbs printed on the cassette inlay which helps the flow of play and prevents a lot of lost time in searching for the correct word — more manufacturers could learn from CCS here.

From the first move of the game you are beset with problems, not the least of which is moving from the first location! Once this is achieved, you can explore something like half the locations, picking up clues to the remaining steps required in banishing the demon.

Among the challenges you'll encounter are a deadly torture chamber, a rather intolerant bat, a greedy trader with an item you need desperately and an altar with a certain fatal attraction.

In summary, *The Staff of Zaranol* is a good, reasonably priced adventure providing plenty of puzzles and an interesting plot. A pleasantly different challenge for adventurers of every skill level. **SG**

SOFTWARE INVENTORY

What's on the way in the adventure world — if you have a new adventure, war game or real-life simulation which you are about to release send a copy and accompanying details to Software Inventory, Micro Adventurer, 12-13 Little Newport St, London WC2H 7PP

Treasure of Meathos

Adventure *Treasure of Meathos* **Micro** *Spectrum 48K* **Price** *£5.00* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *J Copland, 70a Green Lane, Dronfield, Derbyshire*

Adventure games are becoming more and more popular. They open up worlds of enchantment that the eager adventurer can dip into. Of the many types of adventure games, the text adventure has to come at the top of the list. There are no intrusive graphics to distract the dedicated and imaginative player from total immersion into a really great scenario. They are the real classics of the genre.

Treasure of Meathos is a text adventure — the graphics are its excellent title page. The story line is fairly trite — long dead kings, fabulous treasures, magical monsters, and death trapped tombs. (Shades of King Solomon's mines meets the Pharaoh's tomb).

The idea is, of course, to get the treasure and preferably stay alive to spend it as riotously as possible. It's not an exciting, or even a new story line, but *Treasure of Meathos* does have some pleasant surprises up its sleeve (or is it down its dungeons).

The characterisation is excellent. The "Hero!" and that means you!, meets and becomes involved with a whole series of amusing and occasionally annoying characters — everything from daft dwarfs to gruesome grandmas. The characters have to be dealt with on a fairly realistic basis, and you can't always judge by appearances. So if a sweet old grandmother type asks you for a hand-out, remember that charity begins at home.

Although the characters are excellent, the locations are not. Descriptions are crude, brief, and often downright boring, especially when the same description comes up for the umpteenth time for a supposedly new location.

The vocabulary is poor, though you can talk to your computer in sentences, not just two words. The spelling is dreadful, even by my rather lax standards, and although there are some delightful flashes of humour they are somewhat spoilt by repetition. A joke's not funny the sixth time round!

There are the usual 'save game' facilities, and you have the chance to see just how much of the game you've completed when you quit.

For someone fairly new to adventuring, *Treasure of Meathos* would probably keep you amused and entertained for quite some time. But for experienced or master adventurers it just isn't up to standard. In fact, you need to play down to its level, rather than up to yours.

At its price it's a reasonably good buy, and would probably make an excellent gift. But if the author had spent as much time on the locations as he obviously has on characterisation, then he'd have a winner on his hands. **SW**

Waydor!

Adventure *Waydor* **Micro** *Spectrum 48K* **Format** *Cassette* **Price** *£7.50* **Supplier** *IMS Software, 143-145 Uxbridge Road, London W13 9AV.*

I HAVE to admit that this was a surprise — and a nice one, at that. After loading (in the Spectrum version, using LOAD "" CODE, which we don't often see nowadays), it is obvious that this is a good solidly traditional adventure. It includes illustrations at each location, and these are almost instantaneously and very charmingly drawn, too.

Unfortunately, the graphic is presented at each and every visit, there is no facility for switching off the pictures.

Although the pictures are rather pretty, on the other side of the coin, the text descriptions of the locations are rather sparse, so there is not a lot of atmosphere.

As I said, this is an adventure in the good old sense of lurking monsters, dark caves and castles with raised drawbridges.

The thing about traditional adventures is that an experienced adventurer will have come across most of the problems before, and will know how to handle most of

them. So, there is that raised drawbridge, the vampire which will bite you unless you have first drunk the holy water, the keys in one location and, lo and behold! a locked gate in the next.

There is the empty oil lamp and then — what's this? Oh goody, a pool of oil! The lamp is good for about 30-some turns before running out, and you can return again to the pool — but only once, so be prudent in your use of the lit lamp. Fortunately, the dark locations, while being remote, are inter-connected (this is where the keys come in handy).

There is also the traditional maze, illustrated at each step, but it's a doddle. I'm the world's worst maze-solver, and quake with fear when confronted with any example of this most useful weapon in the adventure-writer's arsenal — but I solved this one in two seconds flat (just go down as far as you can go and then south; I couldn't believe it was this simple at first, but a second and third attempt proved it to be so).

Eight treasures are here for the picking and must all be returned to a hut near the start for scoring.

The first two treasures are, unbelievably, in adjacent locations, guarded by the good old vampire.

Although you live for a little while after getting bitten, it is not long enough to get your treasure back to the hut. Yes, the next time, you drink of the Holy Water, but this will only protect you once — after that, you get bitten yet again as the vampire comes back for more blood.

Luckily, there is a Save-game routine, but this seemed to go haywire (on my copy) after a while. Apart from this bug, there was another that would eventually stop proceedings with an ''Out of Memory'' error message.

Waydor is a very good introduction to adventures — it's easily mapped, with lots of useful objects lying around not too far from where they need to be used.

I said that it was a surprise, and this is because it is deeper and more inventive than would at first appear. However, for the experienced adventurer, the problems are not hard enough to give more than a few moments' diversion. **TB**

Secrets of the village

Adventure *Underworld — The Village* **Micro** *Spectrum 48K* **Format** *Cassette* **Price** *£4.95* **Supplier** *Orpheus Ltd, The Smithy, Unit 1, Church Farm, Hatley St George, Nr Sandy, Beds.*

ANOTHER *Quill*'d adventure from a new software firm. On first glance, this is just another adventure, with not much about it to warrant rushing out to buy it. But, look a little closer . . .

You start, standing before a village hall, beside the open boot of your car, where you must return all your treasures for scoring — but before entering, try a little exploring.

Around the village hall lies the village, and you can wander around, mapping as you go. So far, so ordinary. But now, you come across an extensive farm, and eventually stumble across the opening to an underground maze. Fortunately, the route through the maze is posted right at the start, in the form of a very simple code (the directions being those on the cursor keys), so it is quite simple to get through. Unfortunately, I pressed the wrong button at one stage, and was rewarded by being blown to the great adventureland in the sky.

Starting again at the first location, go on, OPEN DOOR and then ENTER DOOR. You will be confronted with the entrance hall. Going West leads you to a stage, upon which you can see some sliding controls. Go to the back of the stage and you will find a Fur Coat. Return to the stage. Now, there must be something to do with those controls — and sure enough, after some manipulating, a hole in the stage opens. This leads to a freezing Meat Factory (ah, a Fur Coat!). Proceeding further, you will eventually come across a lift. Calling the lift and then pressing the correct button will whisk you to one of six floors (apart from the floor level where you start.) One of the floors contains the solution to a puzzle contained on the floor level, another floor holds a *TREASURE, and a couple more remain enigmas (for the moment).

The top floor holds an object which, as so often happens in this adventure, becomes useful in the very next location. Unfortunately, proceeding further requires the player to cross the boundary of the Meat Processing Factory, and blocks off your return. But the reward is another couple of *TREASURES and entry, eventually, to a Magic Castle.

This is my favourite type of game — a rather uninspiring start, full of the old cliches, gradually opening, like a lotus blossom, to reveal an inventive and imaginative test of skill. Advanced adventurers will probably polish this one off in a couple of sittings, but someone looking for a bit of practice will welcome *Village Underworld* (written by Keith Parrock) and watch out for sequels. **TB**

Stradus

Adventure *Gems of Stradus* **Micro** *Amstrad CPC464* **Price** *£8.95* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *Kuma Computers Ltd., 12 Horseshoe Park, Pangbourne, Berks RG8 7JW*

WITH AN ample 42K+ of memory you would think that awesome adventures would be forthcoming for the Amstrad. Well, *Gems of Stradus* doesn't have long narrative descriptions as it relies more on graphic depiction, but even then all the rooms look identical. For such a long loading time, what they used so much memory for I'll never know.

You set out to find amongst the multitude of rooms the hidden treasure room of AM, a feat I have yet to accomplish I might add. It's a graphic/text adventure with the usual two-word commands entered by keyboard with the exception of the movement commands. Movement is accomplished by the corresponding cursor keys, up cursor for forward, down for backwards and so on. It seems to recognise more than a verb-noun combination in a few instances, so some effort has been made to accommodate input like PICK UP THE KEY but in effect it doesn't work for all occasions so you find yourself reverting to the normal two word input.

It uses mode 0 graphics whilst allowing multi colour graphics, and also limits you to 20 column text rather like the Vic20. The graphics themselves are rather 'chunky' and lacking detail. Still, this may be a personal preference, many may argue the benefits of square rooms with the overlaid graphics simply showing the exit doors, and contents if any. Kuma have used the windowing techniques quite well, with one for the said graphic picture, one for text input, and one for the all too scarce descriptions.

As you progress into the game you can collect necessary items like keys. Apart from the locked doors there are also other problems like nasties which snap at your heels (I recommend the stilts for them), poisonous snakes, ghosts that frighten you to death, and a pit that has been my downfall so far. There's also a transporter room that does just that, and drops you into another room, which can be aggravating if you are trying to map the area.

As for gripés, I have a few of varying severity. When I entered a long line of input text it crashed with an Improper Argument error message, I hope this has now been remedied in the commercial version. The keys and the locked doors are colour coded so those of you with the green screen monitor may find it a little awkward. Lastly there is no save game option which is a shame.

With every passing month come even more incredible computers and according to both the computer press and the software houses even more incredible games, such is the growing competitive market of computer software. *Gems of Stradus* strikes me as a game I would have expected to play a year or so ago, not today. **IM**

It's no schloss

Adventure *Mountain Palace Adventure* **Micro** *Commodore 64* **Price** *£7.95* **Format** Cassette **Supplier** *Duckworth, The Old Piano Factory, 43 Gloucester Crescent, London NW1 7DY*

I RECEIVED this adventure as part of a full package including a copy of *Exploring Adventures on the Commodore 64*, a cassette containing the three adventures given as listings in the book and *Mountain Palace Adventure* itself.

The book itself, by Peter Gerrard, is certainly worth a mention. It begins with a short introduction to adventure games and their history and development. This is followed by a well-produced section on how to solve adventures, with many illustrative examples.

The bulk of the volume is dedicated to writing adventures in basic and consists of a very detailed, blow-by-blow account of creating a game called *Castlemaze Adventure*, which was explained so even I could follow it! This approach may be a little outdated since the appearance of the *Quill* but the book is a valuable guide for those interested in the 'mechanics' of adventure programming techniques. Several scenarios are suggested, along with listings for two other adventures which further illustrate the concepts of the book. Useful contacts and suggestions for additional reading are given at the end.

Overall, I was most impressed with *Exploring Adventures* — the only minus points were unabashed 'plugging' of *PCN* as a good source of adventure reviews and a studied ignorance of specialist adventure magazines.

The tape which contains the three adventures listed in the book just refused to load on my machine so I could not evaluate the listings given — short of typing them in. I am sure they would be useful to those following the book, to demonstrate the kind of results that could be obtained. They should present no problem as adventures to avid readers of the book, since what is required to solve them can easily be lifted from the listing.

Now we turn to *Mountain Palace Adventure*. This is a game programmed by John D Ryan using techniques learned from *Exploring Adventures*. The idea is to enter the 'lost palace' and escape with the treasures thereof. The adventure is large in terms of locations but most are devoid of useful objects or treasure, so much exploring is needed before progress can be made.

The command analyser is very poor indeed, using only the first three letters of verb and noun. So blacksmith = blazing torch and so on, and smith must be used to get any response. No synonyms seem to be understood so the game is hampered by being a perpetual search for the EXACT word required rather than for the objects of the quest. There is a small maze, and nice touches like the headless ghost show Mr Ryan has given the program some thought.

I did not enjoy playing *Mountain Palace Adventure* and cannot recommend it. This is not meant to demean the programmer — if this is Mr Ryan's first adventure it is a creditable attempt, although I would have preferred less locations and a better command analyser/vocabulary. However I am staggered that Duckworth should offer this program at £7.95 when first class adventures are available at almost half that price and firms like Eighth Day Software sell highly recommended, *Quilled* adventures at £1.75! **KM**

Trapped in Telengard

Adventure *Telengard* **Micro** *CBM 64* **Format** *Cassette* **Price** *£9.95* **Supplier** *Eclipse Software.*

ROLE-PLAYING or "dungeon and dragon"-type games can be transferred successfully to computer programs, as witnessed by the phenomenal, and deserved, success of Infocom's remarkable *Zork* trilogy. Now Eclipse software is entering the same arena (or dungeon) with *Telengard* for the CBM64, a complex role-playing game with all the traditional trappings including varying attributes for the player-character, six dungeon levels of increasing danger and complexity and a wide range of available commands including a battery of spells which also vary according to the dungeon level.

Since *Telengard* is played in real-time (although the novice has the option of turning off the clock while he/she gets used to the wide range of commands) reactions to events on the screen, which displays attributes, a simple graphical representation of your character and any opponents or items in the same room, have to be within five seconds. If you're too slow off the mark the computer will select a move for you which may well put you at a disadvantage.

Fighting is, as is common in this type of game, largely a matter of luck as to whether your blows or spells defeat the sundry ghouls, goblins and other nasties roaming the dungeon levels.

But not all those you encounter are necessarily enemies. I was just gearing up to confront a looming mummy when it suddenly decided that it liked me and made me a present of a ring of protection thus proving that an adventurer's best friend can be his mummy (sorry about that).

You need to think fast in *Telengard* and you can keep healthy and alert by depositing Treasure in the safety of inns such as the Rocky Rest House, and having a good night's sleep there before returning to the depths.

When squaring up to monster's keep track of whether they're alive or undead (different tactics needed for each) and although mapping the dungeon is obviously necessary you will find that periodically you stumble across a "teleport" gate which whisks you into unknown territory and causes considerable confusion.

The game is complex and the real-time element keeps you on your toes. There are sound effects, including some spooky introductory music and the graphics are reasonable. Not up to *'Zork'* level, but role-playing enthusiasts should find this a reasonable challenge. And take my tip, however many experience and strength points you have, don't take on a dragon until you're a real veteran. In fact, if you can avoid it, don't take on a dragon at all. **BC**

Zany or bored?

Adventure *Zany Adventure* **Micro** *Spectrum 48K* **Format** *Cassette* **Price** *£1.99* **Supplier** *Timothy Betts/Steve Parry, 34 Butts Ash Avenue, Hythe, Southampton.*

THE OBJECT of this budget-priced graphic adventure is to "find the eight spider's legs of time to become the ultimate cool and froody being!". Oh, is that all?

Zany Adventure starts with a nice simple title screen, followed by an example of the play screen.

This consists of four windows. The lower half of the screen contains room descriptions (sometimes two screensful) and object descriptions, as well as a window for your input. The top half of the screen is divided into two further windows, the left one showing a little stick man (you), and the objects at the location, and the righthand window showing the number of spider's legs collected, the directions available to you, as well as a boredom factor.

This seems to be incremented or decremented according to your performance — stand around cogitating too long, and the boredom rating shoots up to nine or 10, and your 'head' is placed in a guillotine and chopped off, thus ending the whole proceedings pretty sharpish!

Having decided to move, your little stickman moves across the screen, a door opens, and you move to the next location.

Text input is terribly slow, and accompanied by a little BEEP at each keystroke. The standard commands are accepted, as well as GIVE THINGY EYEBALL and so on.

Though the adventure is rather slow, the location descriptions are very funny and the whole proceedings are conducted with a nice sense of humour.

The price makes it worth looking at, and you'll get a good few laughs, but don't expect a rip-roaring arcade game, or another *Lords of Midnight*. **TB**

Classified

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DRAGON ADVENTURER Channel 8 enthusiast wishes to exchange software and ideas. Phone 09363 4191 (Cheshire).

WANTED SCOPE Games Designer by ISP and Adventure Builder or Dungeon Builder for the Commodore 64 or other game writing utilities. J. Stuart, 143 Drumossie Avenue, Inverness IV2 3SQ. 0463-242305.

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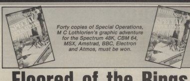
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Floored of the Rings

THIS MONTH, Tisch, in all her glory, is sending you after the N Ring, the next in the series of Runic Rings.

This ring contains within it immense arcane power — in fact, it holds all the powers of the lesser Runic Rings (A to M) which you have already obtained for her, and these 13 rings must be used to get it.

There are three N Rings, but only one is the right one — the other two are deadly imitations, which will kill you if you touch them.

The pattern below is reproduced on the floor of a room in a castle in Hell. Getting to the castle was no problem — but now you have to figure out the secrets of the pattern.

What you know is this: you can safely step on a circle if you are carrying the ring that matches the letter in that circle — but the moment you use a ring to enter a circle, it disappears.

Additionally, you must move from a circle to an adjacent circle — you cannot jump over any.

This means that the path you must follow can only take you through 13 circles, and each of the 13 letters in the first half of the alphabet can be used once, and once only.

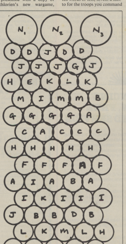
There is only one route that fulfills all these conditions, and you can reach only one of the three circles at the far end of the room. This is the one containing the real ring. Which of the three (N1, N2 or N3) is it?

This month, we are offering 40 copies of Lothlorien's adventure/strategy game, *Special Operations* as prizes.

Special Operations runs on the Spectrum 48K, the CBM 64, MSX, Amstrad, BBC, Electron, and Atmos. Entries must specify one of these machines or be disqualified.

In addition, the first correct entries received for the Spectrum and Commodore 64 will be presented with a copy of Lothlorien's new wargame, *The Battle of the Bulge*.

The tie breaker is simple. The motto of the SAS is, of course, 'Who Dares, Wins'. In ten words or less, invent a motto for the troops you command in *Special Operations*. The funnier, the better.



January's competition has attracted a bumper crop of entries, which only goes to show the popularity of Level 9's games. Almost all of them were correct too — so we had to use the tie breakers here.

The challenge was to invent a comic name for a hypothetical fourth game in the *Silicon Dream* trilogy.

A lot of our readers have fixations on Apples, usually connected with puns on bytes. The best of the Apple bunch was M Cunningham-Brown's *The Apple Pi Syndrome*.

Outstanding entries which had nothing to do with apples included Geert Delahaye's *The Ten Subcommandments*, Clyde Meli's *Exodus of the Silicon Chip and Genesis of the Chocolate Chip*, and Rom (sorry, Ron) Greenwood's *9 GOTO Mount Ararat*.

The best of the lot, however, was Ed Walsh's *Gomorrah is Another Day*.

The other twenty winners were Jason Murphy of Stretford, L Wareham of London, Graham Cluley of Camberley, Alasdair Russell of Aberdeen, D Corbishley of Balbingstone, Gwen Edwards of Blackley, Peter Yearsley of Snaresbrook, Michael Kelly of Wrightington, Paul Cockburn of Cambridge, Les Isbister of Biggleswade, John Sharp of Southport, Mike Dench of Hertford, Michael Cutler of Marlow, Derek Haken of Kingsbridge, C Wise of NW2, Neil Talbot of Bromsgrove, Myra Noble of Muswell Hill, Kevin Smith of Aberdeen, Phil Parker of Bruntsfield, and J Beard of Tooting.

Entries for this month's competition must reach us by April 10, and the winners will be listed in the May issue's Competition Corner.


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